



I lent my mind away
And I still regret it
to this day
I let people control
what I think
And all it did
was make me sink
I didn't make choices
for myself
I left that job
to everybody else
It was like my mind
was a slave
And I had no control
over how I behaved

check out the rest of Marcus' POW on page 10

Hey Beat editorial note readers, how's the good fight? We do hope everything in your world is coming together or making a little more sense, as the year is quickly coming to a close. Wow, what a year, and how fast 2006 has zipped on by. Seems like yesterday we were talking about 1999 coming to a close and the fear of what 2000 was going to bring... Well, well, well, here we are knee deep in 2006, still doing what we love, The Beat Within, as we prepare for a much brighter 2007 for this incredible program and thinking good thoughts for all you important contributors.

Plenty to share in this note, so allow us to do what we do best on this page, ramble... Last week, thanks to the Annie Casey Foundation, this editor and several colleagues (Patricia, Perry and Will) embarked on an amazing and unforgettable journey south for a Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative Inter-site conference, which was also hosted by the Annie E. Casey Foundation who since the early 1990s has worked to strengthen juvenile justice systems across the country.

Well, we are two days back in this office, attempting to knock out this latest gem of an issue that you have in your hands, and of course we're not only thinking about the impact of our visit, we are facing many questions from our colleagues and friends about the city and the conference. Allow this editor to thank Patricia for a good chunk of this editor's note. Since time is of the essence, we took a lot of this from a letter she sent thanking the foundation for inviting us.

Ok, it's so hard to explain the impact the trip had on us. First of all, as a result of our successful Beat workshop (to Probation and System folk from all over the country) at the conference, we made good connections with folks in Ventura County and Jefferson Parish (outside of New Orleans), which we hope can turn quickly into real collaborative relationships. It was so powerful to feel the support of San Francisco and Santa Cruz folks who were at the conference. It made us feel at home in the crowd, and they chimed in during our session with strong words of encouragement to those in the room with questions about how this might work in their counties. The Santa Cruz team also suggested the idea of working together to put together a book of Beat writings for our eleventh anniversary, which we've been thinking about for years and it's just such an amazing mark of progress in this field that the idea came from a probation department - thanks Scott MacDonald.

Second, this editor arranged for The Beat Within to be invited to Rabouin High School, thanks in part to a true believer in librarian, Dennis Monn, who had seen our web site and been in touch with us prior to the trip. Will and Perry did a presentation for 300 students, primarily 9th graders, and were interviewed and photographed by their school newspaper. The librarian wants to start a Beat Within poetry workshop in the library for interested students. Many of the kids at that school are in the probation cycle or destined for it, so the publication resonated with them. Some had gone onto our web site beforehand and chosen favorite poems and posted them on the walls of the school to welcome us, which was such an honor. The kids were practically silent while Will Roy read his poetry (silent 14 year olds?!) and stormed the stage for autographs at the end. It was such a pleasure to be there and witness their excitement. As with all the schools in NOLA, Rabouin was emptied of all books and supplies by FEMA, leaving an empty library and ridiculously insufficient textbook supply. The Beat is going to start a book drive for the library, starting by emptying the shelves of our office and collecting from friends and family. We'd love to include the all of you in this effort.

On Friday we were guests of Jefferson Parish juvenile hall (Rivarde) due to this editor's urging. After our amazing conference presentation, we met a wonderful woman in detention, officer Leslie Gerstung, who truly understands The Beat. She was quick to get us cleared.

Upon entering the hall the staff were so welcoming - from the top administrator to the teachers. We were so caught up in their commitment to the kids' wellbeing and their eagerness to open their doors to us, and impressed especially by the teachers and classrooms, which frankly were in better shape than those at Rabouin High. We ate lunch at Rivarde, the same shrimp stew the kids ate, which - true to New Orleans form - was more delicious than what we are able to find for \$8 in our office neighborhood in San Francisco! We did a presentation for a group of about 50 boys and girls, who seemed shell shocked by the visit, and the 100-page publication of incarcerated voices, and eager to get their voices into it.

After the hall, our new friend Leslie generously took us on a drive through New Orleans, into the Ninth Ward, dodging potholes in all the roads. It's hard to describe and comprehend

the site of street after street of homes, still bearing the X mark of the search and rescue teams, with a beaver dam sized pile of debris outside. She told us that while folks like her are able to rent apartments while rebuilding her home, the poorest people in NOLA, of those who have stayed, are in many cases camping in their own destroyed homes.

We have talked at length already about wanting to find a way to solidify the support we want to give to the folks at Rivarde and Rabouin, in the spirit of supporting institutions committed to developing alternatives to detention for the highest risk young people in their community. We'd love to sustain a Beat presence in New Orleans! Both of these institutions are eager and ready to collaborate, and so are we.

Besides the above-mentioned events, we did have time to have fun. We enjoyed plenty of good food, good music and all and all, good people, staying up to the wee hours of each morning.

All right the topics addressed prior to the workshops were "A Recipe For Success" -There are many different recipes in the world today to create food. A recipe has to be followed in order for the dish to work. So what we want you to do this week is develop a recipe for success.

Do you add a tablespoon of education with a teaspoon of support? Do you mix it in with hangin' on the block all day? Think of how a recipe looks and then develop one for success... What ingredients do you need? In what proportions? What do you need to mix with what to get the result you want? How will you enjoy "the dish" that you are trying to make with this recipe? We can't wait to taste the dish you've come up with...

Our second topic, "I Want To Know Why..."

Third topic, "I'm Tired Of People Telling Me..."

Lastly, "Thanksgiving" -By the time this Beat is in your hands, it will be Thanksgiving. Traditionally, this is the day we get together with family and eat a huge feast... But we're interested in something a little different.

What we want to know is who you need to thank, personally, this Thanksgiving. It could be someone obvious, like your mom who brought you into this world. But it could also be someone we might not expect - maybe the lawyer that worked a deal for you, maybe even the judge that put you here or the staff that keeps you here (for keeping you out of harm's way), maybe the victim of your crime for making you think about things you had not thought about before.

So tell us specifically who you want to thank, and why.

Before we move on, there is still time to consider writing for (the 16th) editorial note writing contest. The contest question to consider writing on is, "A Letter To The President." For this contest we want you serious writers to write a letter to President Bush! It is our goal to not only post these letters in The Beat Within publication and our website, but to send them off to the White House, too! Now, do we need to suggest topics on what to talk about? Doubt it. So with this said, our contest question is all about you writing a letter to President Bush. (Don't write anything that will get you in trouble with the Office of Homeland Security...)

The contest submission deadline was Election Day, Tuesday, November 7, 2006, but as usual given our poor mailing system we decided to extend the contest until December 21, 2006. As is the case with all of our writing contests, all pieces submitted will be featured in the BWO (Beat Without) section of the "big" Beat over several issues. And once all have been featured, The Beat editors will read and vote on their four favorites. From these reads, our top-vote-getter will receive a one-hundred-dollar money order. Our second place winner will get a fifty-dollar money order. And our third and fourth-place winners will receive twenty-five-dollar money orders. Good luck writers!

Let's not forget to acknowledge this week's POW (Piece Of the Week) recipients they are Alexis, The Unknown Writer, Lil' Tank, Dionte, Peaches, Big Vic, Lil' Sam, Crystal, Seban all from the 150 Crew. From SF/YGC we have Lady M, Ro, Randy and Lil' D. We also have Jesse from Santa Cruz who writes two, Josue from Arizona, and Marcus from Marin.

Ok readers, this editorial rant is finished. Before we send this issue out, we want to welcome the young writers of Burges Alternative School in Seguin, Texas, Salinas Youth Center in Monterey County, and the powerful and thoughtful SF/YGC B3 Butterflies.

This issue goes out to you young people and elders who care in the Jefferson Parish Juvenile Hall (Rivarde) and in Rabouin High School in New Orleans. We cannot wait until we publish your work (writings and art work)! Again we thank you for your kindness and openness when we visited you all last week. We are thinking good thoughts, see you soon.

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

Spiritual Advisor: Jack Jacqua

Special Volunteer: Nancy DeMartini

Book Donor: Marisela Norte

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Writers: Thanks to all the participants in our workshops in the San Francisco's Youth Guidance Center and Log Cabin Ranch School and the Walden House Facility, Maricopa County, Arizona, Walden House, Santa Clara, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, EPA Charter, RAP High School, Alameda County, Santa Cruz County and Marin County Juvenile Halls. As well as Natural Bridge in Virginia, and Hidden TREWTH in Rhode Island. If you have any questions or comments about The Beat Within, or if you would like to become a subscriber, contact us at: 275 Ninth St. S.F.CA. 94103 or call (415) 503-4170 or check us out at:

www.thebeatwithin.org

EDITOR'S NOTE	2
LIZZIE M. BURGESS SCHOOL	4
SALINAS YOUTH CENTER	5
B3 BUTTERFLIES	6
PIECES OF THE WEEK	8
CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK	12
STANDOUTS	16
SAN MATEO COUNTY	28
WEEKLY WRITINGS	30
VOICES IN SPANISH	43
THE BEAT WITHOUT	44

Counselor's Corner

From The Beat: We are privileged to have yet another outstanding contribution to our Counselor's Corner by Group Counselor Rossell from Alameda County Juvenile Hall (aka the 150 Crew). We certainly do not have answers to the profoundly important questions he poses here, but we hope Beat readers come up with answers of their own that serve not to excuse the self-destructive behaviors that keep bringing them back to incarceration but rather to motivate them to dig deep enough into their own hearts and minds to make the simple yet difficult changes they need to make in order to free themselves from a system firmly entrenched in retributive justice as opposed to rehabilitation even at the level of juvenile halls. Thank heaven for counselors such as Mr. Rossell, who take seriously their (largely abstract and theoretical) mission to help rehabilitate rather than merely control those youths who come under their care. If you're a Beat reader and you can't tell this counselor is speaking the real truth from a compassionate point of view, you've lost all perspective.

I Want To Know Why

I want to know why so many minors create excuses for not succeeding.

So many times minors transfer the responsibility for their shortcomings onto staff, when the fact is they have refused to deal with their life issues.

I want to know why so many minors believe it's okay to go bad while in their rooms.

I want to know why I see so much self-hatred at such young ages. I want to know why the same core of juveniles keep returning to the hall.

I want to know why so many minors believe they can change when they continue to hang with the same crowd.

I want to know why minors place such a high importance on clothes, cars, diamonds and homes but place less importance on education and self-awareness. I want to know why most minors believe it's okay to be disrespectful toward adults.

I want to know why most minors in juvenile hall score lower test scores than most free juveniles.

I want to know why a huge portion of today's juvenile inmates will become tomorrow's prison and jail population.

I want to know why minors are so quick to fight with their hands and slow to communicate with their mouths.

I want to know why I care so much about them.

I want to know why I have so much hope for the youth.

I want to know why this article won't be read by everyone who needs to read the beat!

I want to know why I can't save everyone.

—Rossell Group Counselor, 150 Crew Counselor

LIZZIE M. BURGESS ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL

weekly writings

From The Beat: We are so honored to have our dear friend and teacher BJ Williams, who is a PMC Instructor at Burges Alternative School in Seguin Texas, submit pieces for his students, which we are so proudly featuring in this week's fabulous issue of The Beat Within. BJ is a long time supporter of our program. It is so nice that he has so kindly send the following pieces for us readers. We asked BJ if he could write an intro for the artists that contributed and this is what he came up with... Can't wait for the next installment! We look forward to plenty more in 2007!

My Life

My life has been through ups and downs,
But my grandparents,
They stood there, near and around,
There's a bunch of stuff that I can say,
bout my grandparents that they did in my life,
that they really didn't have to do,
but they did,
They treat me and my brother and sister,
as they own kids,
oh yes they did,
Dec 23 is my grandfather's birthday,
but I don't know what to do,
I want to show him all and thank him,
for all he did,
My life wouldn't be good as it is,
if neither was around.

-Niq-Dogg

When Will I Let It Go

When will I let it go
'Cause these stars they fo'ever glow
They always be on my mind
From birth Satan wanted me down
I don't know which way to travel
I'm fightin off Satan and it's a lifetime battle
Oh no!! He can't hold me down
Even though I'm lost in the game and can't be found
No matter how deep, I'm still gonna prevail
Even though I'm a struggler and I'm living in hell
Oh well, it ain't new to me
Hard struggles, hard pain influenced me
What's true to me is playin' up a real role
Yah, I keep it real throwd, but I know the deal though
I gotta stay strong and I gotta move on
Through the pain through the game, 'cause I'm on my own
I'm in the zone but I gotta maintain
Up in this hateful world all there is, is just pain
For a playa like me oh why me
Every playa got a throwd life but not like me
When will I let it go
'Cause these stars they fo'ever glow
They always be on my mind
From birth Satan wanted me down
I don't know which way to travel
I'm fightin off Satan

-Lex

Fight The Evils

Every time I go to bed
I wonder how it feels to be dead
Even though I am alive
I sometimes wish I could die
Just because I'm mad as ell
And I won't tell anyone how I feel
It's because I am alone
Dealing with all these problems thrown
My way in the past
It's like shattering glass
But I learned to cope with it
And fight off the evil deeds
Trying to keep me back
From the positive things
Because they do not want me to do right
But here I am doing well
Doing what I have to do
So I can stay out of jail
But when I woke up I fell
Like I am not doing well
But I am and I am glad
That I can live my life
The way that I want to...

-Short Stuff

About The Burges Alternative School Writers

Amanda: Amanda is sensitive and introspective, in and out Juvenile and our Alternative school. (Lizzie M. Burges Alternative School , Tally Neal is the Principal). she loves to read about peoples' experiences, and uses writing to get her thoughts out and now enjoys writing to the beat.

Twill: Very smart. Been coming to this school for about two years. She uses writing to help overcome her temper and gather her thoughts. She also enjoys reading and writing to The Beat.

Me (BJ): I love what I do. I used to work as personal security for celebrities and do concert security on the side (the main job was as a Peace Officer in NYC). I have been a minister and for the last 7 years work with the students here at the Alternative school. It is much more rewarding and closer to my heart , (I used to be one of these kids), than the celebrity protection. I love reading and writing back to the pieces I read. I love communication (I teach it), and this is such a beautiful thing seeing these young folk and old -G's exchanging life experiences. I am looking forward to supporting The Beat in many ways in the near future.

Short Stuff : Currently in a placement. He loves reading and writing to The Beat. He still does not know he will be able to view his work in the next volume, "Fight The Evils."

Lex: Currently in TYC (Texas Youth Corrections). He is a talented rapper and loves reading these pieces and does not yet know he will be in this volume. "When Will I Let It Go."

Niq-Dogg: She is currently attending school here and is a new student to me. She is sensitive and introspective. She enjoys reading things on life and uses writing to express herself.

From Nig Dogg herself... " I'm 15 Yrs old. I'm from Seguin Tx. I live with my grandparents. I have 2 sisters and 2 brothers. I'm in the 8th grade. My hobbies are singing, writing and freestyle. I like to make songs with my cousin. I look up to a lot of music artists like 2Pac, Mary J. Blige, Whitney Houston, Alicia Keys, Brandy, Usher. I want to be a singer/rapper."

Even though I'm a struggler
and I'm living in hell
Oh well, it ain't new to me
Hard struggles, hard pain influenced me

Place To Place

Place to place
All my life
I've been moved place to place,
It's infected my life through out,
Now when my dad talks to me,
I know what he is talking about,
I feel that my mom doesn't care about me,
At times she doesn't call and check up on me,
Oh shhh I think i'm bout to lose my mind,
Place to Place
Like if I was a package,
being sent off
over and over again,
on the other hand,
my dad seems like his girl friend's family
is more important than,
Me and my sister and brother,
it's like we just his friends,
he just doesn't understand,
He should step up and be a better man,
Place to place,
My brother is in a different place,
I feel my dad just doesn't see,
Where he is,
My dad brought his self,
some brand new shoes,
My brother can't ever get a pair,
My dad doesn't care,
'cause if he did,
He would be here,
If only I could sit down and talk
to my dad and tell him,
how I feel,
I have fear in my body,
when he comes near.

-Niq-Dogg

The Life of a Kid

When I was a kid at the age of 2 I was beaten and thrown just like a doll, but then I got smart and started to grow, going to school and learning about life.

Going to high school I had a problem with my life, I didn't like my mom. We had trouble at the house. I started getting sick of it and started to run away. Hung out with the wrong people and dug myself a pit.

Now I am stuck in this hole not knowing what to do. I made a mistake at the age of seventeen, messed up my life trying to have fame, but all that did was give me a year. Now look where I am sitting in the Youth Center, having myself put to the test.

Life in here is nothing you want to have. I just want to go home and see my precious dad.

I am sorry for what I did and I knew that it was wrong. I would like to work it out and live happy with my mom in a nice peaceful town.

To all my friends I love so much, hear my cry and I hope to see you on the outside.

-AG

I am sorry for what I did and I knew that it was wrong. I would like to work it out and live happy

This Life

I went nine months without looking at your eyes,
but now that I did, I realize that this is no life

I want to live,
This is no path I want to take
it is just fake life for me.

I can see why we claim to be G's and cholos.

I can see how solo we feel,
but when you find someone special, you no longer solo, so why to be a cholo?
why to be a G?

-Anonymous

A Real Friend

I usually get a girl then leave her and not talk to her. There is one girl I can't leave, but I don't mind. I used to swear that I loved her and she swore that she loved me.

Things can only last so long. So I thought now that I'm stuck here I feel I only have one real friend. It happens to be my ex. She tells me everything like I care...how does she know I care? It's odd but that's how I feel.

She always tries to make me smile when I feel I can't. I don't know why but she knows me better than I know myself.

When we were together everything was great for awhile...I found and experimented with a new drug. It was new to me, it changed everything the way I look, the way I feel, and the way I treat other people. She would always beg for me to stop and I always would promise her. I always ended up breaking my promise.

She ended up just giving up and leaving me. I was sad so I resorted back to my drug.

Now that I am sober I can see what she wanted from me. She wanted... ME. It's always a place like this where you find a real friend.

-AG

Ghetto

Thugs rolling dice to
get their bills

poor little kids are playing
naked on the hills.

In the ghetto things are bad
a lot of kids don't have a G. E.D.
or most of them aren't high school grads

gangsters play the game of life

by killing their own race

crackheads go and find some

dope at a fast pace

druggie mom is pregnant

the daddy doesn't have a job

and the people right next door

to them got their place robbed

the ghetto is full of gifts

for all around to see

And if you don't want to

mess with the ghetto

well then don't play with

life in the streets.

-Kayla

if you don't want to
mess with the ghetto
well then don't
play with
life in the streets.

From The Beat: Get ready! The following pieces come from our neighbors in the "Salinas Youth Center" in Monterey County, CA. This is their first effort too! We are so honored by the work put into these pieces too. A big thanks to our friend Carolyn Hauck for orchestrating this priceless effort. The new year looks very promising with more juvenile halls showing The Beat readers love, until then thank you Salinas Valley Center, especially you writers! This just in... More info on Carolyn and SYC! "I'm a writer and a teacher. Last year, I taught at Salinas Youth Center and started writing after school with some of the students who I met in my English class who showed an interest in writing. Then I found The Beat Within online and knew immediately that I wanted to connect the students with this great publication! There are a lot of kids with a lot to say about life inside, family, love, and the streets in Monterey County, and The Beat Within is a great place for them to be heard." Thanks!

Broken Heart

What I'm going to write is about some girl that broke my heart.

Well it started off like this... The only reason I asked her out was because my friends told me all kinds of stuff about her and they told me she was easy so I asked her out.

After we started going out for like a month or so I started getting more and more strong feelings for her, but I was afraid to tell this girl my feelings for her because I didn't want her to feel like I was rushing her or something. So I just kept it to myself.

So it was like a whole week already that I didn't tell her, and one of her friends told me she was cheating on me with this guy. And that shhh broke my heart, so I told her that it would be cool if we took a break from each other.

Two days after I tell her lets take a break. I move beds where I sleep. And some guy that used to sleep on the top bunk of me started telling me he wanted to go out with my ex. But I told him no. I told him she was my girlfriend. So he told me she wasn't even my girlfriend anymore.

The next day I asked her back out and she said yeah. But after that guy kept on getting at her so I told him if he wanted to box but he said no. He wasn't even getting at her. But in the end she broke up with me for him and I'm still all pissed about it.

In Your Eyes

When I look into your eyes I can see the sorrow and the pain.

You look at me with this disturbing frown and your teardrops fall like rain.

I can feel your heart burning when I look into your eyes

but I just want to tell you

mom, please don't cry

you tell me that you're sorry

that you felt like you haven't tried

but do you know what it really looks like when I look into your eyes

It looks like love that you have for me, care and

appreciation

And even though I'm barely learning

please mom just be patient.

When I look into your eyes

I can see you cooling down

and now you have a smile on

your face and not a frown

I'm sorry for what I do mom

I hope you know that this is true.

So here I write a poem

Mom dedicated to you.

-Kayla

Sometimes

Sometimes I wonder

when am I gonna die

Because I'm scared of

death and I think

about it every night

Sometimes I wonder

if there is a God in this world

because I pray

almost every day.

Sometimes I wonder

-Alma

Sorry Mommy

Mommy I need you by my side.

Without you I'm going crazy in this life.

Hearing you crying and screaming because

my baby brother died.

And it's painful for you all the time.

Sorry mom, sorry for what you get to go through in this life.

But I will be there for you, so you can survive.

Now you are happy

once again because

I brought my daughter

into your life.

Seein' you cry hurts me the most because

you want to be with me once again.

-Alma

From The Beat: We are so honored to welcome back, so soon too, the SF/YGC B3 Butterflies! A big thank you as always goes to SF/YGC's Woodside School English teacher the very inspiring Megan Mercurio who is an awesome teacher who so believes in the voices of the young people she teaches. What follows is the Butterflies latest submissions. We so look forward to continue working with Megan and her class of fabulous writers in the new year! We hope you enjoy their latest installment of work as much as we do. As always, we'll proudly let the Butterflies take it from here and can't wait to hear from them again! The door is always open!

From The B3 Butterflies: Each and every day we meet as an English class for nearly two hours, and try to make sense of our lives and the world around us. We do this by getting to know the characters on the pages of the literature we read, and by examining our own lives so that we can leave the institution transformed and empowered young women. Our writing arises from our souls, and from the myriad experiences we have endured in our short time on earth. Judge us not, simply take in our words with an open heart and learn from the emotions and stories of our lives.

The following stories are our individual responses to poems that we read which were written by detained prisoners in American prisons during the last century. The stories of these incredible writers inspired us to tell our own stories, in the form poetry.
Special Thanks: Dana Warden.

Your Mistake - Fix It

Four walls got you
Police bothered, stopped and caught you
Mama don't want you
But it's their fault
Not yours, don't be senseless
What about faith?
Four bricks of concrete
Has you trapped
What about the floor?
The ground has never
Failed you
Your daily walk
In life who's been
Holdin' you?
Thank the feet
God gave you
The ground he most
Willing blessed to
You.
Your fault you're
Incarcerated
Your fault you're all alone
Police, the scene, no
Your intent, your situation, your decision
Your fault, your mistake
Fix it!

-Kk

I made a decision that I regret
Now I'm in a place that
I can never forget
I'm locked down half the time,
I feel like I want to cry.

Broken Down

When life gets hard and you have no one to trust
When your days start to get lonely and cold
And the night wind awakes you
When you feel like your life is coming to an end
When all you have is the streets
And all you know is what you've experienced and seen happen
You're broken down
When you're used and abused
When all you have is yourself
When everyone turns the other way
You're broken down
And fast money don't last too long
When you feel like the days are going by so fast
And you see your life flash before your eyes
What can you do?
You're broken down

-TeTe

Locked Up

Miserable and tired
Captured in
Four walls
Surrounded by darkness
No feeling
Of love
Trying to figure out
What I did
So wrong
Always questioning why
It is me
Not you
Asking for forgiveness
Every day
And night

-Xoxo

Free

The cage...the box
The khaki pants the purple shirt
White socks

The three trays a day
You can't go outside and play
"I know you're not feelin' fine!"
Especially when you don't get 7-9."

From nine you go into your box
Now you feel as if you were a trapped
fox

And I really know what you
Wanna be, to get out of these
Gates and be FREE

-Yung

My Life

I miss my bed
I miss my home
But I'm just happy I'm not alone

I know that if I want to go on
I have to be strong
And now I know where I was wrong

I'll have my freedom and I'll have my life
And those are the two things that I prize most in life

I know I could be dead
That's why I'm glad that I fled
Because I feel like I'm still in a daze
From that horrible place

But I know that my life is going to get better
That's why all I want to do is write that letter

-Kateryn

Lock Down

I was free once
Living my life, doing what I wanted
Half the time.
I was happy sometimes
And mad, but all I can do is be glad.
I made a decision that I regret
Now I'm in a place that I can never forget
I'm locked down half the time,
I feel like I want to cry.
I shed my tears so I won't stress.
Sometimes I do go crazy
But I have to come down so they won't
Lock me down. But when God gives me
My second chance I'm gonna do better so that
I won't be locked down ever again
It feels like someone shhh on my
Heart and start my back over with my life

-Ahna

You're broken down
When you're used and abused
When all you have is yourself
When everyone turns the other way
You're broken down

Life After You Left

When you left my life
Seems to be full of pain

Remembering all the memories we shared
Filled my eyes with tears

Knowing you're not here next to me
Makes me so weak

Life after you left my life hasn't been the
Same I feel hurt. I feel like God took my life
That's why I haven't been the same
I think about you day and night and I want to cry
But I keep myself strong knowing that's what you'd like

My life isn't the same my attitude changed
I have more pain inside me I can't concentrate

You're not here, me knowing you're up there above me
Day and night I pray. I look up above
Thinking how life would be if you hadn't left me

-Anna

128 Times Worse

I got locked down 'cause I put in work
Messed around now it's two times worse

 Livin' back in the what
 Never though I'd end up in jail
 Big brother got locked up
 With two million dollars bail
I had a warrant 'cause I witnessed the crime
But I wouldn't snitch so I had to do the time

I got locked down 'cause I put in work
Messed around now it's four times worse

 Started messin with the crys
 Throwin my money away
 Started prostitutin' at the age of eleven
 Now I went to jail
 With a warrant for a 187

I got locked down 'cause I put in work
Messed around now it's eight times worse

 My best friend is now my worse enemy
 Now I know that crys
 Never was a friend to me
 Got locked down because of him
 Now I got six months to serve

I got locked down 'cause I put in work
Messed around now it's sixteen times worse

 Twelve years old getting took from my brother
 Never thought it would happen
 Even if we loved one another
Moved in my with baby daddy in South-Central LA
Got caught up for escorting and got locked away

I got locked down 'cause I put in work
Messed around now it's thirty-two times worse

 Got back to the city
 Started kickin' it with the homies
 And mess in with my brother again
 Got put on the track
 Gettin beat and raped again

I got locked down 'cause I put in work
Messed around now it's sixty-four times worse

 Fifteen years old and pregnant in jail
 In and out of labor
With no freedom of emotional or physical pain in sight
Cryin' myself to sleep every night

Got locked down 'cause I put in work
Messed around now it's one-hundred-twenty-eight times worse

-Guerra

I Dream...

I dream of the future, present and the past.
I wonder if I'll still be in class sittin' on my ass.
I dream of the hurt and the pain I put you through.
One thing you don't know is that I always think of you.
I dream of my babies and wonder when I will see them.
I dream about them all the time and wonder when I'll kiss them.
I dream of my mother every single day and I pray to the Lord to make her okay.
I dream of my life and how I messed it up.
I sit and wonder does anyone give a ...

-LaRonda

I dream of the hurt and the pain
I put you through.
One thing you don't know is that
I always think of you.

Stranger

Am I a stranger in life? 'Cause I'm really well known
To all my homies on the street, yet I'm a stranger back at home
I'm a stranger to my family 'cause they
 Couldn't see me grow up
When I think about how I'm hurting them
It makes me want to throw up
This is a stranger in jail sitting in a one
Man's cell, sayin' to myself what's
This feeling I've never felt?

-Jezebel

Untitled

Love is a strong word not just a
Word that rolls of your tongue
Love is a word with pain and feeling
Love is a word that somebody who
You care about, not somebody who will
Step all around in over your feet
Because love's not a game
It's a word of pain

-Tashelle

My best friend is now my worse enemy
Now I know that crys
Never was a friend to me
Got locked down because of him
Now I got six months to serve

Should I Care?

Should I care about you?
Do you care about me?
Should I care about a person that I've never seen?
Should I care about my mom who left me to face the world alone?
Should I care about my dad whom I've never known?
Should I care about my sister who died on Christmas day?
Should I care about my uncle who died of AIDS cause he was gay?
Should I care?
Cause I don't
If you were to die you think I'd care?
No I won't

-Jezebel

Being Encaged

Being encaged
I feel so much rage
I have no more faith

But mistakes are made
And you learn
Being encaged just
Ain't fun

You have three square meals
A day and your freedom
Is taken away
Being encaged like an animal
That has lost its way

I've never known what it was
Like but I do now and I've
Learned being encaged is not
The one

-Smiley Girl

A Friend

Slowly his temperature is beginning to rise.
 People say they're coo' but always telling him lies.
 A forgotten memory he is.
 Once he dies he was alone so no one heard his cries.
 He was begging for a little attention,
 needed a little break because he had too much
 tension.
 Moms and pops was never there, only fake people who
 said they cared.
 But he was a soldier, so he tried to make it, but the
 smile he put on, he always faked it.
 His internal bleeding was depriving him of life.
 How should he end it? A gun or a knife...
 Neither would be his best option.
 He is cold and alone, a youngsta but he's grown.
 He would call a hotline but he cant reach a phone.
 His body was heavy, holdin' him down like a stone.
 The pain began to get worse, the blood in his veins
 began to burst
 Seeing himself in a hearse, living this life of his has to
 be a curse.
 But he decided to stop midway, thinking tomorrow
 would be a better day.
 Molding it into something better like clay.
 His life wouldn't end this way, then he realized.
 The blood continued to pour, the pain hurt him to the
 core, he couldn't take it no more.
 So he decided to crawl to the closet door, opened it up
 and went inside, he decided to hide.
 But death crept up the left side.
 He wasn't ready for the ride.
 Got the glock and put it to his temple, thinking about
 it he was mental.
 The sweat and tears began to drip, the trembling was
 uncontrollable on his lip,
 Courage began to get bigger, screw it, he pulled the
 trigger.

-The Unknown Writer, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your writing is very powerful and you really evoke the darkness of what your friend's life and state of mind was before he killed himself. We're also very sorry that you lost a friend. It's difficult to understand how someone becomes so desperate they are willing to take their own life. You must have been trying to understand his state of mind when you wrote this piece. We don't know if it was the emotional nature of this particular story to you that evoked such incredible writing but we cannot urge you enough to keep at it. You have real talent! (Not everyone does.)

My Recipe To Live Happy

Every night I'm in this place, I cannot sleep knowing that my mom out there worried about me and stressing over negative stuff, like, "When she get out, is she gone keep doing what she been doing?" And it hurts to know that she think like.

So when I get out, the first thing to start off my dish is a cup of finishing school and getting trust back from my family. Then I'm gone chop up some onions and throw that in with a tablespoon of going back to church and getting baptized again so that I can have the sense of knowing that God trust me. Then when that is all simmered, I'm gone throw in the main thing, the pork chops, so when I get out of college and have a stable job and home, and hopefully be able to get married and have kids and live happily.

-Lady M GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: With a recipe like this, Lady M, we don't see how you can fail to cook up a wonderful life for yourself! Of course, all great recipes take time to bring them to just the right temperature and consistency, and of course you will want to sample that dish as it cooks to perfection. Our guess is that every spoonful will taste better than the last one. Keep this recipe handy in case you find yourself forgetting some of the ingredients...

My recipe for success

1 gallon of family support
 1/2 cup of faith
 5 cups of love
 1 pint of education
 2 cups of focus
 10 gallons of god

-Alexis, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Love it! We love it! But why only a pint of education?

The Worst Place Drugs Have Ever Taken Me...

The worst place drugs have ever taken me is under a bridge. I stayed there for about three days because I was so high on G I didn't feel like going home and listening to my mom's bitching. I asked some homies if I could stay for the night. Some straight up said "no"; others said "no sleepovers on school nights." So I stayed under a bridge for three days and all I did was get high on anything I could get high with. I was awake for three days with nothing to eat or drink. I had about \$600 in my pocket that I had gotten by jacking people's cars, backpacks, purses, or sometimes I would just go around the mall asking people for chump change. The money was gone in about one day all wasted on drugs and not a penny for food or anybody else.

After I sobered up I went home. I didn't know what to tell my mom. All I wanted to do was sleep and eat. I told my mom that I had gotten lost and I didn't know the way home. She didn't believe me but was happy that I was home. After that, I stopped doing G for a while. I learned it is better to stay home with your mom's bitching than to get everybody worried about you and to stay high for three days with nothing to eat, nothing to drink, but all the drugs you could have. I also learned that your homies aren't your real friends and they won't do the things they say they would.

A few weeks later I ended up in Durango. Now I know that G could be really addictive and it could make you do things you don't expect to do. G won't have the same effect on different people and that you don't know what is going to happen when you smoke G because there really isn't a certain way to make it.

- Josue, Durango Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: It sounds like you learned that at home with an angry mom is always a better place to be than alone with a drug. It also sounds like you haven't really decided to quit using drugs for good. It is hard to decide to quit forever, but you share that you weren't really happy even with all the drugs your money could buy. You also weren't happy with friends who didn't really care about you. You were under a bridge when they were all going to school? If you could go to school and work on something you are good at doing, like writing, you seem like you have a lot to share with other people. Best just make those decisions one day at a time.

Why

I want to know why I am always angry
 I want to know why my parents can't tame me
 I want to know why the DA tryna play me
 But the real question is why I played myself
 'Cause really locked in this box is where I placed myself
 I want to know why
 Why is the question, the answer is yet to be know
 I need to know something by the time I go home

-Ro B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What a simple but very deep poem! Actually, we don't think you really have to know the answer by the time you go home (even though we hope you do). If you are truly asking yourself these questions (meaning, if you are sincerely seeking answers), then you've already started down a path that leads to a better place than this. Just keep asking... and moving forward.

Tried As An Adult (Part One)

The lights go on. It's six o'clock. I wake up mad as hell that I have to spend another day here. I stand up, stretch, and remember that I have court. Then I think of what kind of stuff the DA will throw at us today.

The staff comes to my door, unlocks it, and gives me a broom. I sweep out my room and give back the broom. They say, 'get ready for showers', so I do. They close my door and lock it.

Ten minutes pass and staff yells, "stand by." They unlock our doors and we go to take our showers.

Then shortly after, we come back to our rooms. It is now six thirty. I brush my teeth and get my stuff straight. Then I go back to sleep. Staff knocks on my door. My eyes open and they say, "time for court." It is now seven. I get up and straighten up my stuff and step out of my room, put on my shoes, then walk down the hall, straight to the unit's front door.

Staff calls on the radio that they are sending me up. I-S copies. I begin walking to I-S.

When I step out of the unit, I feel the cool morning breeze and can see that it's foggy. But I can't look too long, because I-S is just a short way from my Unit.

I walk into I-S. They take me to a holding cell. It's pretty big. It has a big window next to the door and a concrete slab that goes across the room. There's a mattress on it, so I lay down.

Fifteen minutes go by. I hear the back entrance door click open. I get up and see that the sheriff has arrived. He comes to my door and unlocks it. I stand up and put both knees on the cot. He puts the shackles on me. They have a three-foot chain connected to handcuffs, which he also puts on me. He tells me, "let's go." So now I get up and walk with the sheriff to the back entrance of Juvenile Hall. We approach the door and it clicks open. We walk through, and there is another door. It clicks open, and for five seconds.....

(To be continued next week)

-Jesse, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: We know that this is just the beginning of your story of being tried as an adult. We love the detail in your writing. You slow us down, force us to reenact your day, almost minute by minute. Good writing. We await the next installment with much anticipation.

I think about who might show up at court to see me. Usually, no one goes, but I don't care. Because I don't go to court to see people. I go to court to fight my case.

Tried As An Adult (Part 2)

.....I walk and enjoy my 'freedom'. I am looking at the sky and the trees when I hear "get in the van and watch your step". I snap out of it and look at the sheriff's van. It looks like a cage for animals.

On one side of the van there is a steel bench. In the middle, there is a divider. It looks like some kind of cage (well, technically, it is). There is a bench on the other side. I pick the side I will get into and step into the van. As I get in I am hit hard by this weird smell. Also, I notice it is a lot smaller than it looked from outside the van. But I can't complain. I just sit and wait to be transported to court.

After everyone gets in, we take off. As we leave I look out the back window. I stare at the cars in the parking lot. Then we get to the entrance/exit and the sheriff waits for the cars to go by.

When the time is right the sheriff hits the gas, and as he does that, I push my feet against the floor of the van to keep from tilting over (since I am shackled down and have nothing to hold on to). It works a little, but not that good. So now we're on the road. It feels like the sheriff is going 100 mph! He's not, but it feels that way because I have not been in a car for so long. As he drives, I look at the people behind us on their way to work or school. I stare at them but they can't see me because the windows are tinted. But then I get tired of staring at them and I tilt my head back and close my eyes because the smell and the twists and turns on the road are making me dizzy.

So I think about who might show up at court to see me. Usually, no one goes, but I don't care. Because I don't go to court to see people. I go to court to fight my case. When I open my eyes, we are in good ole Santa Cruz. (Man, I love that city.) So I move close to the back window to see who is out this morning.

The sun is creeping over the hill so I can see out the back window. Sometimes I see some beautiful girls and sometimes I don't. Most times I just see a lot of people going to work. He drives down the street and turns into the courthouse and straight through the parking lot. I see only a couple of cars in the lot. It's mostly empty. So he drives across the lot and turns into a well that leads under the court house, and now I start to get that feeling in the pit of my stomach..... (to be continued next week).

-Jesse, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: We're with you, turning stomach and all. This is good writing. No one who reads this will wonder what it's like to be you. We're waiting for the next installment.

A Recipe For Success

First of all, you shouldn't be in a mess
You gotta keep yo' head up, a recipe for success
Keep yo' head in the books
An' stayin' away from crooks
Gettin' yo' education
An' stayin' away from the 'hood
'Cause nowadays
Lil' kids, they do w'at they wanna
Sayin' "Forget school"
Tryna run from they mamas
Smokin' an' drinkin'
Not usin' they head or not thinkin'
You could been learnin'
But chu chose to smoke a blunt
An' how stupid it that?
You need to turn tha right way
An' w'en you find that way
You'll probably have a brighter day
So think it out, before you make another move
Either go tha right way
Or be another dumb dude

-Randy B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This wonderful poem has all the "wisdom" that The Beat would give. So, if you know all this, what are you doing here? If you apply what you know when you are in a position to make your own decisions again, we won't expect to see you back here ever!

Pray for My Daughter

i pray that my daughter
grows up to be someone
who changes
something in the world
i also pray
that she learns to forgive me
for messing up
for the first part
of her life
lord i pray that she
grows up fine
with nothing wrong with her
lord i also want
her to realize that
me raising her alone is
for the best

-Peaches, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This prayer is one of the most beautiful poems we've ever printed, so full of love, pride, fear, concern and hope. If you can live the love to which you give voice here, it's clear that our daughter will be blessed with a wonderful mother to teach her what she needs to know. Pray as if it all depends on God, and act as if it all depends on you.

because God put me on this earth for a reason

Reality

i'm still so young
i got a lot to learn
i got a lot of feelings
that i need to burn
get rid of them emotions
like a germ
all the time i lost
i wish i could return
but it's gone
never to be here
the past is so close
but the future is near
been locked up for ten months
out of this year
look into my eyes
and you won't see fear
you'll see a confused
individual
never stick to
any ritual
everyone in here
try' to act so grown
talk about all the females
but on the outs they all alone
my expression
is of stone
i'm real all the way
to the bone

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Seems like you are tired of being there, huh? How much more you got? The piece is great, and we hope to hear more pieces like this one in the future. [The foregoing was written by a Beat teen typist who's been in the system, and though it's not part of his job description, we decided to let it stand, as is. However, we'd add:] We broke your lines in half and printed them that way, 'cause each half stands strong and solid as a stone before the next line carries it on the same way or deeper or twists it — like a stone wall across a rolling landscape. Stay solid in your honesty, it is a major strength, but don't confuse it with numbing your heart, 'cause love too is God-sent.

The First Minute

the first minute
that i really spent with
my daughter
i just was in shock
like i was still
baby sitting
someone else's baby
but then she
looked at me
and i realized that i
had made her
and she was mine

-Crystal, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is an amazingly simple yet profound, moving, beautiful confession with the happiest ending — like a revelation! And you'll always be her mom, so get your life together. Only include those in your life who'd know to treat your daughter well and understand you're putting her best interest first.

I'm Tired

I'm tired of Juvenile Hall staff telling me I'm gonna go to the
penitentiary.
I'm tired of fake females.
I'm tired of being locked up.
I'm tired of my everyday struggles.
I'm a youngsta wit grown man priorities.
Raised in this struggle of sex, money, and murder
straight from Oakland.
Mentally I'm wit' sick thoughts.
The streets did it to me.
Ghettos got me crazy.
Everyday I wake up I got permanent mistakes
that pound in my head of stress.
It's been hard, years and years of pain and stress.
Sometimes I say I love the game sometimes I say I hate it.
I gotta go on.

-Seben, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow, you say so much in such a short piece—that's a talented writer who can do that. We can understand why you would be tired of all of the things you mention, and wish that none of the kids we hear from had to be raised in the struggle you deal with—we wish we could save every one of you from this madness and the violence of the streets. It's violence in so many ways—physical and mental, and especially spiritual. The truth is that we can't save you, only you can do that, but we can provide you with the opportunity to express yourself, and we can support you fully in getting your life together. You're obviously a very intelligent person, and we hope you take yourself seriously enough to realize that there are better things out there for you if you do the hard work. We hope you do.

THANKS GIVING

I love Thanksgiving because God put me on this earth for a reason. That reason is probably to help somebody out in life, like my step-father when he needs help. For example, when he needs money, I will give it to him like it's nothing, because money comes and goes.

And another reason God put me on this earth, is to turn my life around, like I did — and to love my enemies and not hate them, because that's what God taught all of his children: to love in their hearts. That's why I have to keep love strong in my heart. I have the strongest love for my family and my girl. So peace out, Beat! This is yo' boy, Lil Sam.

-Lil' Sam, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sam, great piece! You are right. God told us to love each other, and it's nice to see you have caught on. Spread the love now and share with others. [The foregoing was written by a Beat teen typist who's been in the system, and though it's not part of his job description, we decided to let it stand, as is. We'd just like to add:] By the time you read this, you'll probably be in your group home in LA, and we just want to say we wish you the best. With a heart as strong as yours, we know you'll pass the test. And when you're walking wherever on the outs these days, we know you're feeling blessed!

Hard Times

Man, Beat, times be hard
 Because sometimes I be feelin' like hittin' tha block
 'Cause I would make the song cry
 I got tha eyes of a snake — never blink, never cry
 I could live one time
 I'm a real ninja; you could hear it in my rhymes
 But ninjas do what they do
 Because we gotta eat, be fo' real
 It ain't a game; this real life
 And we go through hard times to eat
 'Cause ma life ain't no walk through the park
 I fear many nights alone, lost in the dark
 Me and ma brothers, nothing but death could break us
 apart
 Inside I'm Superman; ain't nothing breakin' this heart
 Yeah, Mama didn't raise no punk
 Taught me to rule, taught me to take shhh
 Yeah, whatever, I want, so that's exactly what I do
 I follow ma mama's rule
 I'm off purp, not d, 'cause that's what ma moma use
 I'm thuggin', dude; I drug abuse
 Look at me, I come from the ghetto
 Why the hell should I be happy?
 Ma hair nappy
 Plus, I grew poor
 And if a ninja like, "W'assup?"
 Then ta leave 'em with lumps

-Lil' Purp B1

From The Beat: We see two different parts in this really interesting poem, Lil Purp. The first is the description of the life you lead and the family you grew up in. The second is the pride you seem to take in that life ("that's exactly what I do.") It's that pride that hurts, because it tells us that you're determined (at least as you see things now) not to change, but to go back to the "thug" life despite your honest fears (of being alone, lost in the dark). We think there's an even bigger fear operating in you, and that is the fear of change. You know your world that you describe so well, and you understandably are afraid to give it up because it's comfortable and familiar. But you are just beginning to experience the consequences of that familiar life, and we know you hate those consequences. (We say "just beginning" because YGC is fun and games compared to what the system has in store down the line.) You're beginning to write about yourself and how you've grown up, and we want to thank you for writing from your heart. But we also want to challenge you to take your thinking to the next level.

Stop Telling Me

I'm tired of people telling me that I am never gonna succeed in life. I'm tired of people telling me I'll never pass high school, I'm tired of people telling me that I will always be in trouble. But now I start to think about why people are telling me this.

All this time I have to think about what I have done to get in here, but now I am starting to think about how to change so that I don't get back in here. And I think that starts with what people say about people and what people tell me. If people tell me I'll never succeed in life, then I'll prove them wrong. If people tell me I'll never pass high school, I'll prove them wrong. At least I'll get a GEP. If people tell me that I'll always be in trouble, I'll get out of here and never come back, and prove them wrong.

I'm tired of people telling me this and that, so I'll change, and soon I will hear what I want to hear.

-Lionfishy B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You've got it just right, Lionfishy! If you're tired of hearing people tell you what you should do or what you'll never succeed at doing, then it's time to change up so that you can hear a different song. If it takes hearing these negative things to motivate you to change, then so be it. We think you should want to do all the things that you lay out here (succeed in life, get your education, stay out of trouble) for yourself, but if that isn't enough for you to change without wanting to prove the "nay sayers" wrong, go for it!

Why Do People Pick On The Weak?

I want to know why people judge people who are mentally challenged. I want to know why people think they are different from me and you. I don't get why people point and laugh, like they're a circus. It doesn't make sense. People label them like mentally challenged children don't have a meaning or a purpose on this Earth. It really makes me mad and really hurts me.

I have relatives who have Down Syndrome and autism, and they are so smart. I wonder why people are very judgmental when it's very possible that anyone could have been born like that. I'm going to try my best to put smiles on the faces of the children with Down Syndrome and prove a lot of people wrong.

-Pinky, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: We don't think you have to prove these people wrong; we already know they are wrong! We think people laugh at those with mental conditions (especially when those conditions are visible in how they talk or walk or handle themselves) because they are insecure in themselves and need someone to look down on. It's easy to look down on those who seem "different" — and especially on those whose differences make them "weaker" in one sense or another. But the truth is, those who laugh at people with Down Syndrome or autism (or any other physical/mental condition) are the true weak ones!

I Wanna Know

W'at up, Beat? This Monsta Goofy once again. I was at another county for a couple weeks finishing another old case, but now I'm back.

Well, you know what I want to know? I would like to know why I'm still on this earth. I've done some shady shhh to rivals, and other people that in my eyes deserved it. And on the flip side, I've been jumped countless times, been stabbed, and shot more than enough times. And if I add up all the times in the past I've been down, I've been torcido for well over two years.

Some people say I'm institutionalized, and as much as I want to disagree, I can't 'cause deep down I know it's true. Well, now I believe I'm still on my toes 'cause of my son. He's the one that keeps my going. But then it trips me out 'cause I haven't been with him in almost eight months, and if my case beats my ass I'm going down for a lot more time. When I get out he will probably be a few years old.

Well I gotta go. Keep trucha y alrato

-Monsta Goofy B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Why do you think you're still on this earth, Goofy? Of course, we can't answer that question for you, but we can say that when we sit with you, talk with you, read what you have to say, we know there are many excellent reasons for you to be on this earth. You are still developing that excellent mind of yours, so there's no telling how far that development will take you. We know you MUST be the teacher your son needs (and will need even more if he grows up for a few years without you), and that beyond your own son, you have a great deal to teach everyone. We KNOW what a good teacher you could be. What we don't know is whether or not you can be as good a student to your own teaching... You've lived enough of those gang experiences for several lifetimes. How about trying something new?

A Recipe For Success

My recipe for success will consists of me being a wealthy man with a good job and benefits. I would like to be an entrepreneur. You know, have a chain of jobs to offer mostly to my people in the ghetto. So the old and your men won't end up in this messed up system, and so the young ladies won't become 'ho'es or get stuffed like a Thanksgiving turkey with that work. I want peace and happiness for my people so we won't have to sell drugs, rob or thug on the streets and end up in juvie or dead somewhere.

-Dubb B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We hope you can find peace and happiness, if not for all your people, then at least for yourself and your family. We love what you would like to do if we were wealthy (helping your people in the ghetto), but the first person you have to help is yourself. Unless you find a way to stay out of places like this, you can't be much help to anyone. So, what are your plans to get that good job with benefits?

Can I Live?

If I were to die tonight...
 Who would remember me?
 Mother and father don't count
 So who's befriended me?
 They say count your blessing
 But I've been blessed
 So many times
 Can't even remember tha last blessing
 So I guess it's this life of mine
 My loving father planted me
 My beautiful mother gave birth
 My heavenly father gave me life
 But what is it worth?
 Money, cars and jewels — tha simple finer things in life
 Materials don't last
 So help me find peace... and fast
 If I were to live and see tomorrow
 Who would care?
 If I needed a blessing
 And one had one...
 Who would spare?

-D-Greedy Grinda B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Okay, Grinda, this is more like it! The blessings you give thanks for in this tight poem are exactly the things you should be thankful for, the true treasures in everyone's life: mother and father and faith in God. Knowing what you should be grateful for is the beginning of knowing how to live your life to honor those to whom you are giving thanks. If God has blessed you, what do you plan to do (as opposed to say) in order to show your gratitude?

Stop

I'm tired of people telling me what to do.
 Why can't I make choices for myself sometimes?
 I want to decide whether I want to go to sleep at a certain time.
 I'm tired of people telling me that I'm gonna be just like my Dad
 just because I made stupid and dumb decisions,
 just because my Dad is lazy living behind other people.
 I'm tired of people telling me I'm going to be on the streets.
 I bet that no one told them they're gonna be like this person
 or they're gonna be out on the streets or in prison.
 I'm tired of people telling me that I need to stay away from my friends or stay away from people that are older than I am
 and to stay away from grown people.
 I'm tired of people telling me to wear this or wear that.
 I'm tired of people telling me that I look like this or I look like that
 by the way my hair looks.
 I'm tired of people telling me to act like someone else.
 Why can't I be myself?

-Aaron, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You can be yourself. Don't listen to what people say just follow your heart, even as cheesy as it sounds it works. If you don't want to be like your dad, you won't be. If you want to be a success, you will be.

My dad died for me to survive
 He lives in me 100% of my drive

Do G's Get To Heaven

I want to know why... everybody gotta die
 Do G's get to heaven. I don't wanna cry
 My dad passed on, he left here an angel
 I never got to say goodbye, it was hella painful
 Now I'm all alone,
 I'm also all out, that's how I've grown
 Talent I have shown
 I'm gonna scream it 'till I'm dead and all
 My dad died for me to survive
 He lives in me 100% of my drive
 So they ask who am I
 I say don't trip
 you say I wanna know why
 I don't bump by gums
 I just lie
 But why good people gotta die?
 It's hard to say,
 My dad left me lonesome and I think about him every day.
 Or maybe he thinks about me, I'm not crazy, one day I'll see,
 Until then don't judge me.
 RIP Wayne Hall

-Wheazie-wop, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You have the talent, you have the will, and even though your dad is gone, we can see from the way you write about him that you have the love. You know how they say so many people fail in the ghetto because their fathers are gone, you can be the other way around: Make that success you seek to honor your father and love for him.

We lost but I still had a good time, because
 I was able to see what it will look like, but
 even better when one day I play in Oakland
 Raiders Stadium.

The Stadium

As I have been sitting in my cell, I wonder what i am going to be or what my skills will take me to. I hope it's to the pros cause all my life I played football, rushing and tacking players from the other time. I remember when I use to play for tech every game day, my favorite girl fans would wear my Jersey number, which was number 1. I hit the fields with so much energy knowing I was goin' to do my best. My best games I would say were my night games, especially with all the lights and girls cheering. But the other girls from the other team always looked better. But I guess that's how it always been.

One game I think of every night was the game we lost 64 to 6. That game was pitiful, and it was by Pinole Valley. They just really had us on speed, getting to the line, and getting the play done. And with those two combinations, they ended the game with a win. The funnest game of the season was when we played Castlemont. They were calling so many cheap penalties and they still lost. When we then advanced to the championship against Skyline in the Oakland Raiders Coliseum. We lost but I still had a good time, because I was able to see what it will look like, but even better when one day I play in Oakland Raiders Stadium.

-Tank, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When you get up each week to read your pieces in workshop, impervious to noise, ready to wait out any kind of disrespect get things done, we see the same determination and positive thinking that kept you going in.

I Want To Know Why:

I wanna know why I was put in this place,
Not literally, I mean figuratively

I wanna know why I am forced to hide what I do
because a few conservative democrats don't believe
in it.

I wanna know why these people stay in my business,
askin' questions constantly for their own
entertainment.

I wanna know why the government cares so much
about locking me up
but don't care to work wit' me getting out.

I wanna know why the system is designed for me to fail.

and instead of chances I got strikes.

I wanna know why I can't help but hurt the ones I love,
hurt the ones I hate, and end up hurtin' myself,

I wanna know why the Man refuses to hear us,
even when we're beggin' and bangin' on his window.

-I As In Me, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Many questions, few answers. These are good questions that will be hard to get answers to. We certainly don't have them. But sometimes a question is enough. If you know the system is set up for you to fail, do you think that means you will fail? Or does it mean you'll just have to work a bit harder to be successful. We won't pretend that you don't have it worse than many (you, the kids in the hall). But there are some that get out there. There are some that don't die, don't go to the Y, don't go to the Pen, don't miss out on an education. Why can't that be you?

Prostitution

Prostitution is one of the main reasons young girls are in the hall.

They stand on the corner to get money for the mall.
Some sell their bodies for men like straight up dummies.
'Cause all they really want is their private and their money.
They go to the bathroom and it burns when they pee.
So they think of all the ways they cought that STD.

NO, HELL NAW that will never be me!

I'll rather catch another case for assault and robbery. You look into her face and see she's happy and smart. But that's the girl you seen on high street after dark.

You laugh at her jokes and call your friend
But deep down you think, will her prostitution end?
You tell her to straighten up 'cause she's about to be
released.

A couple of months later you see her on the track. You shake your head damn, I knew she'd be back.

-Tyisha, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Great writing style and an important topic. But why do you think girls sell their bodies? Just to go to the mall? We don't believe that. It might seem that way, but very often girls have been sexually abused or raped or their survival depends on it. Rarely would a happy, healthy girl with a secure home and parents that support and love her, choose to go out on the street and prostitute herself. So you are right, but remember to have compassion and know that there is probably a dark story behind that girl you're thinking is a ho.

I gotta miss Christmas and the birth of my lil' baby boy, my 18th birthday, and also like half the summer.

Giving Thanks

Well this Thanksgiving I'm not going to be home. I'm most likely gonna be in here at YGC or at the Ranch, and dat's some messed up shhh, 'cause I gotta miss Christmas and the birth of my lil' baby boy, my 18th birthday, and also like half the summer.

Well let me get back to Thanksgiving. I thank my mom for bringing me in this world and raising me, and trying to teach me the right from wrong. I should've listened so I wouldn't be in this predicament. I also thank the judge for not sending me to Texas. Instead she's sending me to the Ranch. I also thank God for listening to my prayers and helping recognize what I have to do in life.

And I also thank God for making ma girl pregnant and about to make me a father. I can't wait till my baby is out, and when I get out the Ranch I ain't doing no more hot shhhh. I'm finna be the father that my dad was and never leave my kid's life, and give it anything ad everything he wants.

Well Beat, I'ma talk to y'all next week. Stay safe. To all you ninjas and girls that's locked up, take it one step at a time and stay strong. Peace.

-Young Hitta B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We know your mom will want to read this piece giving her thanks for all that she has done and sacrificed for you. But this piece is more important for you than for her, and we hope you cut it out and tape it to your bedroom mirror so you will never forget what you owe both the generation above you (your mom) and the generation below you (your child-to-be). We don't understand why people your age don't seem to value their own lives enough to stay out of jail (or out of the cemetery), but suddenly see the world differently when they are responsible for bringing a new life into the world. But whether we understand that change or not, we applaud it! Yes, you are about to undertake the most important and responsible job there is, and that is to be a parent who guides his child and protects it from harm. In order to do that, you have to guide yourself and protect yourself from harm. You haven't done a great job of this up to now, so we hope you are up to the changes we both know you have to make.

Feeling So Lonely

Sitting here in this room all alone,
surrounded by these white walls.

Feeling so lonely.

My heart is aching, longing... wanting for someone to care.

Tears streaming down my face.

Faster and faster they come.

Feeling as if they'll never stop.

Never crying so hard before.

Not knowing what to do.

So much pain.

I can't take it no more.

Wanting just to die.

Thinking what would it matter... if I was dead?"

I have nothing to live for.

-Snow Bunny, Marin

From The Beat: we've felt the pain you're talking about and that's what it takes for you to change. The system wasn't designed to rehabilitate you it was made to hold you, isolate you from society, keep you separate you from people who abide by the rules set in place to govern society. You have to take all that negative energy, all those negative thoughts you're feeling and transform them into self-motivation... the motivation you're going to need in order to stay out of trouble when you get out of that place. The memories of what you're going through should be enough to stay out of trouble. If not, you're going to end up right back where you are now and feeling the same way you feel right now but with stupid added to the list.

I wanna know why I can't help
but hurt the ones I love,
hurt the ones I hate, and end up hurtin' myself,
I wanna know why the Man refuses to hear us,
even when we're beggin' and bangin' on his window.

I Know My Recipe

"I know my recipe." It just took me till now, coming here to YGC to be able to finally put it all into place and know that I have to finally use it, make it happen. I got plenty put in and what I need to do, but times I need help.

My education is so important. Sometimes I'm ashamed to know I put it off for something that was not worth it. Even if it was, what could (common sense) be more important than your education at age where that should be almost all you do is go to school.

Family is so important to me, our relationship is so strong and for the better I have to now prove that I have changed — family, my education, life itself, it's what I need, My mind, maturity, determination to work this recipe is "on point."

-Kendrick GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This fine piece tells us that you already have your mind, maturity, and determination. It's really up to you to decide when to throw those things in the pot and start eating a new diet. You should be proud, not ashamed, to see the importance of education, even if you put it off for a while. It's only those people who don't have the inner strength and patience to get their educations that should feel shame.

Brick Wall

i hide my feelings behind a brick wall
put my guard up, so it's not easy to fall
it's hard to tell the real from the phony
i'd rather just be by myself and lonely
trying to stay positive it's a huge struggle
everyone trying to bring me down and get me in trouble
but i don't fall into their trap
i want to go back to my rightful habitat
where i feel comfortable in my zone
as long as i got my family i won't be alone
so while i am down, i will stay quiet and keep to myself
these suckers keep trying me, it's bad for their health
i don't talk and they still want to play
if i start to walk, their grave is where they'll lay
so i suggest they stay out of my way
because the brick wall is gonna come down one day

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Good piece, as far as expressing yourself. You say you stay out the way of others and don't let them piss you off right? Well then, there you have it there. Do that and get out and then stay out and live the rest of your life in happiness. Sound good? Its not hard you just have to want it. [The foregoing was written by a Beat teen typist who's been in the system, and though it's not part of his job description, we decided to let it stand, as is. However, we'd add:] Be careful about making threats even though it's the lingo of your peers, i.e., the language they speak and understand. The more you sink back into their mentality, the harder it will be to prepare yourself for the reality of living and staying free on the outside after your release.

Respect This

Day in and day out, staff here try to make youngstas respect them. But reality is, you ain't gon' respect somebody if you don't respect yo'self.

I'm not gon' sit up and front in somebody's face like I got respect for them though. Staff needs to stop tryin'a force ninjas to respect them. But you got to treat yourself right — by not going to jail and having to let someone else be in control of your life.

They control what you do, where you go, and when. So respect yourself when you get out, and don't come back again.

-Lil' Eli, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a powerfully positive message, although if you can think things this far through, you can learn to offer staff some respect, too. Forget about those forcing whom to do what, and show respect to some OG's who can teach you a lot. As for your plan not to come back again, just remember — if you think you can do it slicker, you'll run out of freedom quicker.

it's hard to tell the real from the phony
i'd rather just be by myself and lonely
trying to stay positive
it's a huge struggle

God, Why?

i want to know why i
had to drop out of school
i want to know why did i
have to mess up early
i want to know why do i
have to be on probation
i want to know why i have to
come back to jail if I ran
i want to know why people
do crazy things to women
i want to know why do boys
trash talk us like we dirt
because we like roses
i want to know why
boys mean mug girls
i want to know why
when a girl like a boy
he just mean mug her
i want to know why
i had to be born
i want to know why
i had to be hurt
and so — what i do
is keep my head up
and talk to god and
look at my posters

-Lody, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What a terrific poem that moves from asking difficult questions of yourself, to asking why others do what they do, to asking why you have to experience the pain of both — which is what life in this world amounts to when people fail to treat themselves and/or others with love and respect. Keeping talking God and asking questions, but don't forget to listen, in those quiet moments that come your way, for loving answers.

... what could (common sense)
be more important than your
education at age where that
should be almost all you do is go
to school.

Start Over

If I could start over, I would just change ma life and go to school, get a summer job, be at home wit' ma family and lil' brothers, eating fat, smokin' dro, playin' sports. But instead, I chose a life full of real ninjas doing 'hood shhh, doing dirt in them Oakland streets. banging tha turf.

-Lil' Purp B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Lil' Purp, you can change your life and you know it. You write as if all the choices you'll ever have to make in life are already made even though you're not yet a man. You have many years of decisions ahead of you, so if you wish you could start over, you will start over. And if you don't, then the only honest conclusion anyone can reach is that what you've written here is not true! In other words, there is no "if" about it. You CAN start over, but we haven't seen the evidence that you really want to. Each time you choose the streets over the school and summer job options, you're not only risking your freedom and your life, you're also telling us that you don't want anything to change in your life. And if you don't want it to change, it won't change. You'll go out and do the same dirt, and the system will take your body and throw it in jail — and that game will go on until you lose! Period! There is no other option! The only way to win the game that just keeps stripping you of your freedom is not to play it. Nobody has an infinite number of chances. Don't wait for that one second of regret that changes everything for all time!

My Mother I Love

My dear mother, I love you so much. How much you'll never know. I thank you for the times we had, regardless whether they were good or bad. I know we've hurt each other in the past, but let me tell you, my mother, I love you. If I could take it back I would. I know I can't, so this is why I promise you from here on that I will do good and stay by your side because I know I have to be an example for the little one.

So my mother, I love you I hope you know. I'm so very sorry, and I pray to the Man above that you will forgive me for all the heartache I've caused. This is for my mother I love.

-Smiley G GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is truly a piece of writing that will bring tears to anyone's eyes who reads it. It surely brought tears to our eyes. Keep up the good work!

Getting Used To Jail

Yeah, St. Louis back in jail! People told me I was coming back. I about to go to the Ranch now, but when I complete the Ranch I'ma be back like crack, feel me. But I am 'bout to start doing good. I am tired of being in jail all my life. I am starting to get used to this shhh and that ain't no good thing. They sending ninjas to that new jail, but I know I ain't about to see that.

But yeah, back to my page, you feel. I am stuck in this hellhole. I ain't smoked in three weeks. I am stuck in B4. I can only look at the girls but I can't touch them. But on some real shhh, I really want to get my life straight. I just gotta find my wife, feel me, settle down and live my life. Ninjas can't live in this beef shhhh all the time, and ninjas can't keep hustling for real.

When I get out, I am on one for real. I'm serious. This St. Louis hitting y'all one last time... Out

-St. Louis B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: People told you that you'd be coming back, and you did. How you're telling us that you're not coming back again — so we have to ask what you plan to do differently this time that you didn't do before? What will be the hardest thing for you to avoid coming back here? Can you get some help to deal with that "hardest" thing? There is no shame at all in looking for the support you'll need, and we hope you find it — but you have to rely on yourself before you turn to a "wife" to rely on! Before you're able to support someone else, you first have to find a way to support yourself. And we're not just talking about the kind of support that comes from making money; we're talking about your entire life!

How I Feel

I'm right here in B5, YGC, and I want to let you know how I feel now. Well, I was in DRB and I just got out from my room. I've been here 20 days, and I been thinking to many things. Nobody know and nobody can feel what I feel and what I think, but I think that I can tell you some thoughts that I have.

I feel hella guilty because my mom is so bad she's sick because of me. She lives in Mexico and all what she knows it's that I'm in jail. She doesn't know what kind of jail. That's why she thinks that I'm in hell. The point is that she think in the worst way the place named jail.

Well I've been thinking on that. I can't even call her. She's worried about me because I used to call her every week. I'm scared of myself. I'm scared because I think that I can do stupid shhh, you feel me, like hurting myself or even tryna kill myself. I was gonna do it but thank to a counselor I'm right here writing what I feel. You know being locked up for three days in your room, you could do a stupid shhh.

-Erick-Tweety B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We feel the frustration and pain you express (and don't express) in this sad piece, and we sympathize with your feelings. We don't know what that fine counselor said to make you stay in this world and in this program, but whatever it was, pay close attention. The feelings you're experiencing right now will not always be the feelings you have. Time changes all things — but only if you give yourself the chance to experience the future! Yes, you have put your mother in a bad situation, but it's a situation that you can change by doing the right thing now. We think that one day you will be sitting at your mother's table talking about this unfortunate experience, laughing and crying about it. But you will be laughing and crying together. Just keep that thought in your mind!

People — I'm Tired!

I'm tired of people telling me what to do
Tired of family saying I'm ashamed of you
Disrespecting in every sentence they say
Talking about me every day

I went out with some friends at night
Got arrested because I got into a fight
As much as they talk about me
They do show support
Always show up during court
Even though I'm in here

I have no doubt, one day I'm gonna be out
I'm tired of the cops rolling through
One day I'm gonna tell them, "Forget you too!"

-Kevin B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It seems like you're being pulled in two directions with this piece, Kevin — gratitude to your family for showing support, but anger at your family for disrespect. So, we want to flip the script slightly and have you turn your attention away from your family's support (or lack thereof), and toward your own self. Are you doing what you need to do to show yourself support? Are you acting with respect towards yourself and your life? We have the feeling that if you start living respectfully, if you start acting out of a sense of self-respect, the respect of your family and others will follow.

A Recipe For Success

What's cracking wit' The Beat? This ya boy, Twon, straight outta B1. My recipe for success is to continue going to school and finish my high school year, and get my education. Also strugglin' off the block, 'cause the block will get you killed.

But I'ma leave it like this. Get it how you live and live how you get it, and, bam, am out this thing.

-Twon B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We want to endorse your two-part recipe, and remind you that both parts are critical for your success — both getting your education and getting off the block. Don't fall for that common belief that you can do a little of both and get away with it. The block is like quicksand. Put one foot in it, and soon you'll be sucked right back down into the slime. Education is your key. Use it to open those doors.

She Says/ I Say

She says I'm tha definition of a responsible man
Put no one before tha money that rest in my hand
She says our relationship is a weird situation
I only trust myself, and lack inspiration
But when eyes meet, feelings reappear
I close my eyes and I can see you clear
She say if a woman wants to know how a man treat his
women

Go to his house and peep how he treats his mama
But she says it's weird, because I'm so respectful to
tha woman that raised me,

But not to tha woman I wake up next to

She says I'm great in many ways

But tha tables turn when it's time to get paid

She says I'm wonderful but responsible at times,
I say she loves me, but I take advantage of her love...

All tha time

-Lil' D B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a well-written piece, but it lacks any explanation of your behavior. Why do you take advantage of the love that's given to you? Where do you think it will lead you if you don't respect the woman next to you as much as you respect the woman who brought you into this world? When does disrespect turn into respect? Do you think females are less worthy of respect than males? Where do your ideas about men and women — and how each should be treated — come from? These are some of the unanswered questions this piece raises.

More Power To You

If you wanna go on doing you, go ahead
Play duck and dodge with the hot lead,
End up with that 25 to L and no hope,
Smoke rope that'll quickly progress to dope,
I'ma do me with or without you anyways,
Make money, be successful, and live long days
It way take a while to change though
But I'ma put a foot forward and step mo'

-Vago B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We think you are exactly right — without committing yourself to change, you can count on the consequences you're now experiencing not changing. To change one you must change the other. So we are in your corner when you write that you're going to do it the right way, slow and steady. Do you know the story of the "Tortoise and the Hare?" The slow tortoise wins the race by just putting one foot in front of the other and never trying to take short cuts. It may have taken him longer, but he reached the finish line and the fast hare (rabbit) did not. Think about it.

I'm Tired of People Telling Me

... right from wrong! I'm not stupid. I just play the role of it. I really do know right from wrong, but I guess I just choose the bad things.

I know that I'm really supposed to do good, but it's like the devil on the left shoulder and the angel on the right. And it seems like I always follow and listen to the devil when I should be listening to the one on my right shoulder, 'cause the angel is on the side of what's good and what's right.

Basically I've decided that I'm gonna start doing good, start doing the right thing! That way I don't have to hear people telling me what I already know. Well, that's what I'm tired of being told! That's it, I'm out. Gone!

-Lil' Soldier, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Well it's nice to hear that you want to do good. The next step now is actually doing it. Still, it all starts with a change of attitude, 'cause you're not going to do right unless you want to, and even then it won't be all that easy to get both feet out of the muck and the mire of the lower road to walk the path that's higher. On the real, it sounds funny to say you'd do it just to get those self-righteous folks to shut up, and that by itself isn't enough 'cause you also have to want it for yourself — but it sure is a pleasure when they have nothing to say but you're doing okay. Then you find the haters all lined up on the other side, calling you a square, a punk, a fake and a quitter. And you'll get tired of hearing that, too, but don't let it turn you back — no matter what anyone says, stay on track. Look for progress not perfection, and stay heading in the right direction.

I Want To Know Why

I don't know what I wanna know... but I do wanna know why we are put on earth and what is our purpose to do here. Actually I wanna know a lot of things, but as I wake each day as I stare in the mirror, I wonder how each day after day I still remain calm and on this earth. As I write/speak to you, I hope you listen and hear me. I may look normal, talk normal, and even act normal, but I'm not normal.

In my first year as a teenager, I got HIV and have learned to live with this all my life. It has not been easy but I've learned this is me... this is who I am. I do not have a death wish, but how could I have allowed myself to let this happen? My strength won't allow me to go any further... so I thought!

-Relly Boe B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Maybe our purpose in life is to try to discover our purpose in life... At one time, your HIV status would have been a death sentence (we know many, many people who have lost it all to that disease), but nowadays, it is a manageable condition. Maybe the future will hold a cure. As to why you allowed this to happen, all we can say is not to be too hard on yourself. Everybody does things that feel good right now without thinking of the long-term consequences, whether it's smoking cigarettes, driving without a seatbelt, or having unprotected sex. Sometimes, the consequences for failing to think beyond today can affect us for the rest of our lives. Remember this: You are not dying from HIV, you are living with it. Just keep living!

My Recipe For Success

My recipe for success is a tablespoon of education, a teaspoon of support, a tablespoon of support from your family, a tablespoon of good teachers so you can learn, and two tablespoons of respect for yourself and others. Then mix it all together, and that's my recipe for success.

-Lil' Dee B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Thanks for coming up with a real "recipe" for success. We wish you'd thrown in a few more details though, like how you plan to bring this mixture together and turn it into a meal that is good for you and for your future!

Group Home Bound

What's up Beat? Well I been here forty-plus days and ain't nothing new.

I am gone be going to a group home for the first time. It's something I'm not mentally prepared for but it's something it looks like I got to do, so I'm gone step up and finally handle my responsibilities and be the women I know I can be.

It's funny because I came in here thinking I ought to go straight home. But honestly this visit was a reality check so, to every female in here: you ain't nothing if you believe this is a way a life. All I know is it ain't the way of my life.

-Malina, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're glad you feel that way. Remember your own words when being in that group home is testing your patience and limits. How many girls in there with you in the hall right now are there because they ran from a group home. A lot! So there is clearly something that is unpleasant about group homes. Approach your program strategically. Remember that if you run, that your time in the group home starts all over again, maybe with more time tacked on. So as hard as it gets (short of actual physical abuse) remember to keep your head down and finish and then be out!

*I'm gonna start doing good, start doing
the right thing! That way I don't have to
hear people telling me
what I already know*

Thanksgiving at Camp Sweeney

What it do, Beat! This Lil' T at Camp Sweeney. Thanksgiving's coming up, and they about to give us a long turf visit! Ya feel me? I'm'a try to be cool here so I could get that good HV (home visit).

I got partnas up here, but we ain't up to nothing — just tryin' to get out. For those who are coming to Camp Sweeney, this program is easy. Ya just gotta be cool. Almost everybody up here pimpin' this thang! It ain't nothing. Time go' by quick when you going home every week!

I'm a do this three mo' months and get out fo' good! 'Cause next time they doing no playing wit' me — that strike hurt! But I'm gonna go home and spend time on the turf and with my family for Thanksgiving. I'm gonna get back at you. All right then.

-Lil' T, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's nice to see how you can turn a bad thing into a good thing, and you show us how with your words in this piece. But now, careful on that turf visit. They say you don't go to a barber shop unless you want a haircut. So why are you going to visit the spot? Are you sure you just want to see old friends? It's easy to get caught up in it all over again, first in drugging, then in thugging — and if you catch a violation, you've wasted this good program. The closer you get to your release, the more carefully you need to watch your own feet and where they lead you — 'cause you don't wanna play the system's foo', do you?

If I Could Change One Moment

if there was a moment i could change
staying up all night hustling, busting them thangs
i'd bring my ninjas lil' c, mikey, c-o-c, and d-dubb back
to earth

we'd ride up to them ninjas' spot and put in work
i still wonder today why that had to happen
why we couldn't just restart the game like madden
why i had to be in jail and not someplace else
why did the white man buy crack and guns to help
why 'm sitting here writing this silly-ass riddle
why some ninjas act hard but soft in the middle

-Lil' E, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Still sounds like you don't want to change much. Why do you think you are so attracted to this life style that by now you ought know is really a hospitals-jails-and-death style. Maybe you're locked up so you can be the one to survive, see through the game and come out alive. Whether you know it or not, you're racing toward death out there money chasing on the spot. (As for your "white man" question: some say during the Reagan years, the FBI and the White House decided that the best way to destroy what they saw as our nation's number one enemy — the Black Panthers coming out of Oakland — was to introduce guns and crack into the ghetto. Then when one young black man kills another fighting over some spot, one goes to the grave, the other to prison, and both get got!) By the way, this is your best piece ever, by far! Props!

Thanks (For) Giving

This thanksgiving I want to give a speacial thanks to my foster parents Georgia and Anthony. My foster mom Georgia may not have brought me into this world but she loves me and treats me like her own daughter.

I have lived with them since I was nine years old and they have done so much in the past nine years. Not once did they give up on me, even though I know I was not the easiest person to live with. I don't deserve them but I know that I was blessed to have such a great family who loves me so much, and stuck with me even as I went to jail. They came and visited me every Saturday, Sunday, and Wednesday, even though they have very busy schedules. I love them very much and I want to say thank you mom and dad for your love and support.

-Your Daughter, Alexis, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Now show them that you're grateful and be a good girl, do what they'd want you to do and think about where you'd be without them every time you're about to make a bad decision.

Baby'Mama Drama

baby'mama drama
 it' what i go through
 she said it's mine
 what am i supposed to do
 i try to make sense
 of everything in my head
 she gave me a soft kiss
 while we laid in the bed
 nine months later her daughter
 supposed to be mines
 she told me i'm the dad
 and she want me off the grind
 but now everything's changed
 she's not my daughter
 but my feelings will always
 stay the same
 baby'mama drama
 i love her, i want her
 but she lied so i would help
 take care of her
 because i had wealth

-Ally Bo, 150 Crew

From the Beat: With all due respect, this should just be called part one, 'cause this is only half of your baby drama problem. You still love this baby like it's your own, and we believe it too — but isn't there another problem to think through? Lovers in life may come and go, but a father's a father forever, you know! So write us a part two, 'cause that's what a self-proclaimed "poet king" would do — and like this poem you just wrote, make be beautiful and true as a musical note. Whether or not it sounds sad too, may still be up to you. You bit off a lot for your age, and now you've got to chew. Think it through, in rhyme! Take your time. Can't wait to see part two next!

Why?

-I'm tired of people telling me that I'm a statistic.

-Alexis

From The Beat: If you want to do things right, you will, it might just take time for you to figure out how. In the meantime, don't mess up so much that it puts you in a bad position when you do figure out how to get it right. FYI, we're all statistics. It's up to you to be an individual.

Giving Thanks to Mom

What's up, Beat! This is Tony from Fremont. With Thanksgiving in mind, I want to thank my mom a whole lot.

When I'm not locked up, I'm always kickin' it with my homies. I leave home about one in the afternoon and don't come back till hella late. She'd tell me all the time not to get in trouble, and I never listened. The next thing you know, she has to pick me up from the Fremont jail!

She went through hell raising me when I was growing up. Now I'm about to be eighteen, and I want to thank her for always doing her best taking care of me. I mean, it seemed like my school would call her every day for something. And all those calls from Juvenile Hall, breakin' the bad news to her that I'm in jail (again).

I want to especially thank her for visiting me once a week. That's why on my first home pass I'm'a spend the whole twelve hours with her.

And I want to thank the Camp counselors for their helping me prepare myself for when I get out.

-Tony, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's a good thing that you want to spend the home pass with your mom. We know she'll appreciate it. But now if she gets irritated at you for a minute (or an hour, or whatever), don't trip and rush out of the house all angry. Just let her pain flow over you like a waterfall, and realize she's been carrying a lot of worry for a long time. Get over it as fast as you can, and let her do the same — cause you know how much she loves you! (We're not saying this will happen. We hope it's all gravy! Oh, and we mailed her the handwritten copy of your piece.) Peace.

Thanksgiving

For thanksgiving, I would like to thanks God first for putting me in this world and giving me the gifts and talent to do things. Also, I like to thank my mother for bringing me in this world and teaching me right, giving me a home to live in, to eat at, to even sleep. I thank my father, too, for bringing me in this world. I thank my family most for being there for me and helping me get through hard times I have been through and showing me love that there here for me. I thank my baby momma about to be having my child real soon, and just being here for me. I'm just thankful for everything in life. I'm a thankful person.

-J Pitt B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We hope you are able to get your life together enough to be the responsible father that every child deserves. Now it's up to you to give your child the life he or she deserves so that in the future you will receive a Thanksgiving piece directed to you that you will justly deserve.

Tired

I'm tired of people telling me that I ain't good enough
Tired of hearin' shhh being talked
Tired of the court sayin' I got more time.
I'm tired of suckas bangin' on the wall when I'm
trying to sleep
I'm tired of waking up in the morning and hearing,
"Five-minute stand by"
But like come by in 10-15 minutes later when I wanna
so back to sleep.
I'm tired of this waste...
So I'ma stay out this place

-David B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It's your last line that makes this piece! You've figured out the most important element of all that you're tired of — which is that you own your own future, and where you end up (and what you end up being tired of) is within your own hands and control.

My Scholarship

The worst thing about me being locked up is that before I came in here I had a really good chance of getting a football scholarship to Texas A&M or Oklahoma State (University). I get so upset that I got myself locked up, when I should be on the outs stickin' marks in a game.

I know it is ultimately my fault that I am in this situation and it's what makes the hurt even worse. This is my first time ever being locked up and they still give me three years in the Y.

At night when I am sittin' in my room, I start to feel real bad for myself and start wishing that I could go back in time and change what I did. But then I figured something out: I can't. So now I'm stuck having to pay for my crime and I can accept that. Maybe when I get out, I can finish pursuing my dreams.

Who knows, anything can happen.

-Outta Pocket, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We want you to know that it is never, ever, ever too late for you to live your dreams. Stay strong, mentally and physically, remember how three years can drop down if you man up and stay out of trouble in the Y, remember that the talent and discipline you brought to practice and performance on the field is a part of your personality that NOTHING can take away from you if you decide to hold on. You end your piece by saying "anything can happen" and you're right, anything can happen. But only if you decide to fight for it. For example, there's nothing to stop you from studying in CYA, right? Which means by the time you get out you could be more ready for college than ever, and make it even further when you're away at school. Plus you'll be older, less likely to fall apart in college, right? All you need is that determination you've already shown in field!

My Grandfather

My life is hard without my grandfather, because he was a great man.

He had raised me and my sister since we was a baby. He came from down south and he came to Oakland when he was 20 years old.

Then time went, and by the time he was 38 he had six girls. He had raised them by himself. And then at age 60 years old, my grandfather used to help people out and give them money, and when they had needed it, he give it to them. But people started trying on him and doing bad things to him. People had tried to rob his house like two times because they thought he had a safe in the house, and I was there when they had tried to do it.

A year passed and he made up his mind and sold his house and moved out of state and moved on with his life, then four years passed and he had died of a heart attack and that was it.

RIP Larry Z. Goitre

We miss you and will never forget you.

-Lil' Man Man, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a great piece, and a great intro to the character of your grandfather. It leaves us wanting to know so much more... like, what's your favorite memory of him? How old were you when he decided to leave? And how is this connected to CPS coming to take you away from him? Tell us more, you know there's always room in these pages for the stories of Lil' Man Man.

All I Got Is God And Hope

I am in here mad as hell, I haven't gon' to court in hella long. It is just like man I need to get out, I need to beat my case. Hopefully, well I'm fighting my case God get me through this, I mean I pray every night, how much will it take?

If I get through this I am going to change my life and go the right way. I really hope He gets me through this so I can show him I can do the right thing. So people who read this just take a minute to think about your life.

I get hope from my grandma and my girl. I know they are praying for me. And all I can do now is hope!!!

-Lil' Rome, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We hope for you too, Lil Rome. But even more than wanting you to get out, we want you to stay out. Do you have a plan, a dream for the future, something you really want from your life? If you do, tell us what it is. Once you know what you want from the bottom of your heart, with the love and support of your grandma and your girl, you might just achieve it.

This Life

Man I'm tired of being in here. I can't stand it but I know I will get through it.

I hate that now that the judge has given me five months in here I have a different impact on life. But I wish I had the impact I have now when I was out. I wouldn't be in here but I think this is what I needed but it didn't have to be this long. But it's good.

I got like two more months left then I'm out with a straight release. But I miss my mom and my girlfriend hella much. That's the only reason why I'm trippin'.

When I was at home with my mom and girlfriend I didn't take advantage of it. I didn't care, it took the judge to give me a sentence to be thankful for everything I have. But the only thing I can do now is wait 'till I get out and show my thanks and my love. But its good I'm be a boss about the situation and hold my head up high and suck it up.

So to who all that read this, take care of yourself and your loved ones. Do not take life for granted, it's too short. And know when you in jail everything is out of your control and you can't do shhh about it, so stay out jail.

-Young Knight, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You are experiencing one of the most important lessons in life: losing something important, in this case your freedom, to make you savor the good things in life. Don't forget it once your out and make the same mistake twice.

Tired of It All

i'm tired of people telling me they hard
i'm tired of people saying they do real shhh
i'm tired of being at camp
i'm tired of living the thug life
i'm tired of walking with guns
i'm tired of selling grapes
i'm tired of all the wrong shhh
but i'll never be tired of god in my life

-Cartier, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Perfect! Glad to see you tired of doing wrong — now it's time to take action and stay strong. As far as these other j-cats and what they say — don't worry: people will be people. Okay? Just keep God in your heart and follow his way: Do right, no matter what! And take each day one day at a time, till you're out of the dark wilderness of the wrong-doing mind and living in the bright light of the good life you're pursuing — and feeling fine! By then you'll have good habits and no longer be tempted to sav' it.

Change from Child To Adult

Today I'm going to write about my childish childhood and how I can use those mistakes to make me into a better adult. While I'm still earning around my child mistakes. I'm trying to maintain an adult mind-frame on life. I'm living on top of that. I'm trying to get out of the child hood image. I'm trying to show and make a bigger impact on my life and my mother's life by stepping into adult hood. I just want to say that the whole reason why I'm changing my life from childhood to adult is because of the mistakes i made to ruin other people's lives, including mine.

So the whole reason I'm maturing is not because I'm turning eighteen, it's because I have a chance to change for me, and my fallen ninjas.

-Twan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That last line is one of the wisest things we've read in a long time. Some people think that a person automatically becomes an adult the day they turn 18, but the truth is that's just in the eye of the law. What you're talking about here is something more along the lines of deciding to man up and become an adult. So what are the first steps you will need to take, as you change from childhood to adulthood?

I'm Tired Of People Telling Me!

I'm tired of peoples judging me
They think they know me best
They think I'm out there gang banging
Putting two slugs in people's chests
They take one good look at me
And categorized me with the rest
I'm trying to survive here, just like you
So don't think of me as more or less

-Mandi, Marin

From The Beat: Nice poem, Mandi! How have people gotten the impression that you're out there gangbanging? Especially, why do people even consider that you've shot someone twice? It's not fair if people stereotype you, but there are ways you can stop it. Can you stay out of anything that even looks like gangbanging? Pretty soon people will stop even thinking that you're in the streets.

I Want To Know Why

Why everything bad always happen to me? First I go to jail. Then I get shot. Then I go back two more times. And now I'm back in here.

I don't like people telling what to do. I like my house and my family. When I get out I'm never coming back. I know I said that the last time but I'm serious this time. I'm gonna leave the block alone. And listen to my family.

I need to get a job and work. I need to change my ways if God gives me another chance I'm gonna take advantage.

-Lil' Poon, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Solid Piece. You are exactly right. Keep up the positive attitude and writings. Bad things happen to everyone, so don't feel like a victim. Think positively, and you'll make positive decisions.

I Hate

i want to know
why police
hate black people
why they stereotype
and why they plant drugs
on someone for no
reason other than
they can
why do they sell drugs
to kids
i hate
dirty cops i hate
the law i hate
the system i hate
i hate i hate
i hate the governor
and his ways
i hate i hate

-Lil' L, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There's plenty of hate going around, and anyone looking for something or someone to hate, will find plenty to hate. But what will you do with your hate? Will your hate for the law keep you a prisoner of the system? Dirty cops plant drugs because they see the streets as a war zone, just like so many young thugs and gangsters do, and each sees the other as the enemy. We're excusing neither racism nor the tactics of dirty cops, but neither can we excuse the gang and turf wars that have taken the lives of so many of our contributors. Focus your anger on the need to change the way things are. Start with yourself to insure you will no longer fall victim to the streets, neither to the game nor the police. Then as a role model to your peers, keep telling the truth to anyone willing to hear. Dirty cops and governors building more prisons are making terrible and unjust decisions. Let's all work together against them and change the system. It might strange, but criminals in the street are working with them — providing excuses for their cruel abuses of power.

Whatever

It's hard to catch up to time when you get out.
You have to adapt and find your loved ones and
reminisce on the time

you were gone and locked up.

It seems that time stops when you come to the hall
and time moves too fast when you get out.

-Elisi, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We loved that last reflection on how time can play tricks on you. It would be so much better if it were the other way around! But since it isn't, please tell us what your plans are, and how you intend on making sure you end this in/out cycle that's hurting you so much!

Placement For A Year

What's up, Beat? It's Big T. This is my last time writing in here. I'm leaving here Monday. I'm happy and mad at the same time. I'm going to Our House, the placement. I don't want to go.

When I first heard that I was going to a placement, I said, "I'm not going to run." Now that I'm about to go, I am probably not going to run, but it is just in my mind.

I've been here for seventy-three days and I know that it is not that long to some people, but to me it is. I'm going to be gone for at least twelve months. Well, it was good writing for you. Ya boy,

-Big T, Marin

From The Beat: A year and seventy-three days may seem like a long time away from home, Big T. But you've got to think about whatever it was that brought you into juvy and ask yourself was it worth being away for so long? While you're away, can you figure out another way to manage your life that's legal, that won't bring the authorities down on you? Can you give up whatever you've been messing with and has been messing with you? We hope so. We'll miss you and we wish you tons of luck! Stay safe!

A Recipe For Success

Man you know I got to rhyme for The Beat one more time:

Day after day you might say it's hard but guess what?
Stop going to the blvd to find work to sell dope.

All a ninja got to do is not come to the block,
not re-cop, not get chased down, not always got to run around.

Could just stay in one place.

-Lil' Nijil, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It sounds easy, right? But it must not be, since so many people keep returning to the block. Why do you think it's so hard to make that choice? Thanks for your wisdom. Stay thinking positive.

Only One Life

Live,
Love,
Life!

'Cause you only get one.

-Snow Bunny, Marin

From The Beat: You're affirming that life, including yours, is precious! You're right! Maybe, when you express how valuable you think life is, that life will show you how really spectacular it is! We hope so!

Why Do I Have To Be A Menace To Society?

When I talk, I'm a menace to society
When I walk, I'm a menace to society
When I act, I'm a menace to society
When I fight, I'm a menace to society
When you look at me, I'm a menace to society
When I'm angry I'm a menace to society
When I'm happy, I'm a menace to society
Why do I have to be a menace to society?

-Lewy Lew, Marin

From The Beat: You write like you live in the heart of being a menace to society. Do you consider yourself a menace to society? Why? Who views you like a menace to society?

The outs changin' clothes
The ins all you hear is closing do's.
The ins eating food so disgusting.
The outs going to Burger King

I Don't Even Know You

I don't even know you and I hate you
All I know is my best friend used to date you
How would you like it if she held you down and raped you?
Tried to drive, but she never could escape you
I don't even know you
But people wanna put a bullet in your head
I saw her layin' there in the hospital bed
'Bout a few hours later the doctor said she was dead
RIP Lil' Ray Ray

-Baby Face, Marin

From The Beat: What an excruciating poem to read. The rape and death of your friend must have been hideous for you to go through. Your friend and you have our hearts. How are you managing, now that you're suffering because of what happened to your friend? Can you just stay quiet for a while, while you're going through this? Just be sure you aren't even thinking about revenging her death. That will solve nothing and will only get you in a huge mess. You're already grieving big time. Please be gentle with yourself.

The Troll Turned The Kids Into Toast!

There were these kids—Andy, Lindsay, Jeff and Uniqua.

Uniqua dared Andy to go into this haunted house that is rumored to be inhabited by a troll. Andy went in there; the rest of them waited for two hours and he never came out. The next day Lindsay went in looking for Andy and she never came out.

Now it was Halloween and Jeff and Uniqua went in. Next thing they see when they entered were two pieces of toast on the ground. Then, at the top of the stairway, these big red, glowing eyes gleamed. Then a big yell said in an ugly voice, "Kevin! Hey Kevin!" Next he said, "You're not Kevin," and a big, ugly troll emerged and grabbed Jeff and turned him into toast.

Uniqua ran up the stairs, into a closet, where she saw a little kid with raggedy clothes. She said, "Are you Kevin?" He said, "Yeah." So she picked him up and threw him down the stairs. The troll said, "A, Kevin. Can I have some toast? Hey, can I move up?" Then Uniqua jumped out the closet and all of her friends turned back to normal and they went trick or treating.

-James, Marin

From The Beat: Great story! Scary and funny. You're good in writing friction stories. Have you thought becoming a fiction writer?

Be Successful

- 1 Tablespoon of happiness
- 2 Measuring cup of laughter
- 1 Barrel education
- 1 Mix bowl determination
- 1 Barrel of skill
- 1 Canon of courage

-Derrick, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Profound poem! Put those things to use when you get out and even now. Keep it up.

Why Do I Have to Say 'Bye?

I want to know why I can't fly to the sky
I want to know why I can't bake a pie
I want to know why I can't cry
I want to know why people have to die.
I want to know why people lose pride.
I want to know why I have to say bye.

-Answers, 150 Crew

From The Beat: And we want to know why you wrote such a terrific and heartfelt poem and didn't sign your name! Next time you write make sure you autograph your work, it's too good to go anonymous.

The Outs And The Ins

On the outs we have fun
The ins we're on the run
The outs playing sports
The ins going to court
The outs changin' clothes
The ins all you hear is closing do's.
The ins eating food so disgusting.
The outs going to Burger King
The ins sleeping in the cold
The outs sleeping and having something to hold
The ins suck
The out's fun.

-Muktar, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Great piece, Muktar, we can see why your name means leader. Here's a topic for your next poem: If the outs are so great, why do you think so many people end up on the ins?

And Why Is Milk White?

I want to know why do people hate other people that they don't even know?

Why is there so much drama in the city I live in?
Why do we have to go to the bathroom just because we made a mistake?

Why is milk white?
Why?

People hate people that they don't know because they don't know them.

There is so much drama in the city I live in because everyone's trying to do the same thing.

They're trying to get rich quick, so they can live like the people on TV

-Manny, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's good you stepped up and tried to answer some of your very difficult questions, and your answers gave us a lot to think about. Do you think that maybe in your answers there are solutions? Like: What if we made an effort to teach each other about who other people's points of view, so we would "know" them? And what if we found other ways for people to earned money? And what if we stopped looking to TV to tell us who we should be?

I Write Raps About How I Feel

I write to express myself in words.

I write my raps about how I feel.

If I'm feeling hyphy, I'm going to write about going down.

If I'm feeling sad,

I'm going to write about life.

I love to write.

-Lewy Lew, Marin

From The Beat: You often write straight out of your heart. Do you ever write just for the pleasure of it? To get something off your mind? Why don't you give The Beat your raps? You know we'll be happy to publish them. Thanks for writing?

The Bay The World

I live with a view of San Francisco and St. Vincent Church, and when I was young I thought that St. Vincent Church was Disneyland, because at night it is all lit up. And I thought the Bay Bridge was the Brooklyn Bridge, and I just thought the Bay was the whole world.

-Young person, Marin

From The Beat: Great story! It's funny how, when you're young, you struggle to incorporate the world you know into being the whole world, because there's no way you can know the real world is so unbelievably huge! How did you find out the world is bigger than your neighborhood?

Letting Out Some Emotions

I just wanted to write about my own topic, because I just want to let out some emotions that I'm feeling, since I just got back from court.

This also falls into that subject I write, because, well, at court there was just bullshhh, ya feel me? But, whatever. Bein' in here ain't fun, fo' real. Every night I been in this witch, I've cried. I really wanna get out.

I know you probably think, "Oh, it's nothin'," but, trust, you don't wanna get into all this. Ain't no game.

I mean, I don't wanna go through all this, especially since I'm still a youngin' myself, and I don't need to go through this.

Well, I can't think of what else to write. So I pray y'all get out all this bis' and start doin' good, like I'm 'bout to do when I'm free! I'm out...gone!!

-Snow Bunny, Marin

From The Beat: Of course you don't have to go through all this. This place is not for you. With this piece, we can see that this experience will be enough for you to realize what those negative things can bring to your life. Your young and you should be enjoying your youth doing things free! Enjoy this phase of your life now, because when you get older, things will not be the same.

Violets Are Black

Roses are red

Violets are black

Staying in juvy is very, very wack

Halloween was over when the clock struck nine

The food was so bad, I had to decline

I hope I leave within a week

Because I'm getting bad acne on my left cheek

Last night, I woke up sweating

To find myself wrapped up in spider webbing

Now is the time to end this story

Because on Tuesdays we watched that guy Maury

I'm asking my dad to send some cash

'Cause the sheets they provide give me a rash

My hair is so blonde I make people blind

That's probably why my name is Sunshine

-Beach Boi, Marin

From The Beat: If you think being in juvy is weak, what are you doing up in here? If this is definitely not the place where you belong, then where/what is that place? Are you working hard in getting it back?

I Never Dreamt I'd Get Sent To Placement

What up, Beat? It's ya boy, Big T. I have so much on my mind. I don't know where to start. Well, I'm hella scared about going to placement. I never would have dreamt I would be going, but I am. It sucks. I want to go home.

Another thing on my mind are drugs. I don't know why, but it just is. I think of the day I'm going to smoke weed again, but I don't know if I want to.

I'm so confused about a lot of things. I've done a lot of bad things in my life and look where it got me. So if you have the chance to stop and go home, then do it. Trust me, it's worth it.

-Big T, Marin

From The Beat: It must be scary to be forced to go to placement, when you've never been away from your home and family. It probably will change much of your life, which is part of its purpose. It also seems like you've gotten the point and learned your lesson. In this case, we will use your same words against you, "if you get a chance to stop and go home, then do it."

November Is A Curse To Me!

What's up? My name is Melissa and I have a lot on my mind.

First off, November 15th will be one year that my best friend died and I loved her (RIP.) My friend Oanh died, due to a heart attack from too much crystal methamphetamine. I love that word, but hate the drug!

I love you, my beautiful angel. She was only 21 years old, so when I found out that, I stopped smoking crystal, too, in memory of her, and I stayed sober seven months, but I relapsed.

Now I haven't done it since August and my sobriety date is September 28, 2006.

Second, my best friend is in jail and he might get deported. That sucks, but it's all good.

Third, I lost a very good friend of 'mine, 'cause we argued and she hates me.

Well, I hate November--too much memories, but some good memories I got is when I went to Las Vegas. I miss that place. I miss my friends, too.

-Shy Z, Marin

From The Beat: The good news is that in memory of your friend who died from overdose on crystal meth you've stopped using it and are staying sober, but it will still take plenty of work to beat this drug. Keep yourself clean and out of this place, and through time, you will see different and beautiful chances that will benefit your entire life. This is the chance you have to fix your life. Don't waste it by relapsing again. When you get out, try to do positive activities that can help you flake those negative ones.

I Thought People Were Born With Accents

When I was little, for some reason I thought people were born with accents. I would've never thought people would have to be in a country for a certain amount of time. But I guess not, because one day I had taken some free time out by asking her and she said, "hell, no, boy, you're crazy," so then I just started laughing. But now that I'm all grown up, it all makes sense to me!

-Blake, Marin

From The Beat: What did you think the first time you heard people speaking a foreign language? Do you have accent? Is there a language/accents you admire?

RIP To My Dead Loved Ones

My dad is Ricardo. He was an OG in the game before he died in a car accident on March 17, 2000. Me and him was real close. I loved him a lot and now he gone — that's the reason why I'm the way I am today.

RIP to my ninja Marcellus Haley. That's brah right dere! We use' to do hella stuff together, getting it real hard. Now he dead and gone.

RIP to my brah Davon. He was a solid young ninja. He was takin' off on everybody! Brah got hands slappin' ninjas wit' no problem.

RIP to Willie Clay. He cool to be around. Me and him, we wasn't real close, but he was coo'.

RIP to my cousin Marco. Man, I miss that ninja like shhh! I would have never thought it was gon' happen to him. I don't even know what to say but brah I love you!

RIP to my brah Drew. Well, we wasn't that close either, but that was my sister' boyfriend, but he coo'. I was there when he died! When he was on that ground, I was across the street, mad as hell.

RIP to my padna J-5. Brah go hard.

RIP to my grandma. I miss her too. Grandma, I love you.

RIP Paco: I seen Paco a couple times, but we just smoked together and drank, not too much of nothing, but he was coo'.

-Lil' Cookie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This list is tragic! Starting with your father! If only he could have taught you before he died, that the gangsta life is not really any way to live, because it always ends up in hospitals, jails or death. We appreciate the love and respect you are offering in memory of those who have died in the street, but your getting mad when you were there and Drew got killed, won't bring him back. All that is after the fact. You keep talking about YG's "going hard" but that's just a locomotive to the graveyard. Broaden your vision of what's possible. Because your father lived and died a G, you don't have to follow in his footsteps. Your grandma would rather see you live long, do right not wrong, a raise a family to carry her love and teachings on.

God Visited Me in a Vision

One day I went to my cell and I was asleep. I woke up, and God was sitting on the end of my bed! I was very frightened when I saw him, but he is a good man to talk to.

While we were talking, I asked him some questions about my life and about the USA. I asked him why do political men do what they do? He said, "It's because some of them people don't know my word. A lot of people today don't know my word, and so you just have to pray for them, Travis."

And he told me about my life. He said that I need to start living it right before someone comes to cut it short. I had a very good talk with him. He told me to pray everyday for wisdom and understanding. "The change comes," he said, "from me."

-Choyce, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Now that you know all this, use it! You are on the right path. Maintain it and help others to find the same path you have chosen. [The foregoing was written by a Beat teen typist who's been in the system, and though it's not part of his job description, we decided to let it stand, as is. However, we'd add: And remember it's not perfection on one said and "mo' love or no love" on the other. You job is to keep striving to keep love alive in your heart, pray, and keep doing what's right.

I'm Just Saying

i'm doin' what i gotta do
life is hard at times
muthafonkas catchin' cases
no-good's droppin' dimes
never on a bendin' knee
my head to the sky
incarceration, funerals, gunshots
good time's night time
ain't nothin' funny
three fifty-seven's, hk's and big thangs buddy
monster mah ninja
wish we could trade places
when you passed on homeboy
my knees hit the pavement
i say it's all good — but it's really not
funny-ass ninjas act like they forgot
they be wanting to move on
but i can't — our bond is too strong
e and the homies as always stickin' to the script
cruiting more and more ninjas that is down for it
n't see moms — lil' bro' and sis' they outta state
that's a ton of stress on mah dome
committed this crime so i'm'a ride this out alone
d to the bone and known for getting mah blast on
and when the enemy would see me it's on
writing the homies same ol' stuff in the hood
i'm in this life for good

-H-tipsy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: No, it's really not all good. As a matter of fact, it's all bad. You're not in this life for good; you're in it for bad. Man, you were out there bringing more youngsters into this desperate mode that will have you, and everyone else who lives by the gangster code, locked up for life or dead. Stop trying to bury the truth under all those lies in your head. You should be out there telling youngsters to get a job instead, to go to school and sleep at night in their own bed. And if they got a momma in their life to treat her right, not have her up all night worried you won't come home alive — or her son will be locked up for life on the inside. But maybe this is the worst, you're bragging about being known to shoot off gun bursts. You're making yourself into a walking and talking curse. As time passes here in the Hall, we hope you have the courage to take a step back and take an honest look at it all. It's never too late to change till you're buried in your grave with a rotting brain. If you're still talking, aight — you can still start walking right. It's time to bend your knew in prayer, 'cause you know God's grace is always there. If you're ready to repent, you'll find forgiveness is heaven sent.

Why My Mind Ain't Right

why my mind ain't right
 'cause i'm a thief in the night
 run around wit' guns no time to fight
 everything that happen in life happen for a reason
 i live life wit' no remorse like some kind of demon
 robbin' sellin' drugs and thievin'
 on all night no time for sleepin'
 lord jesus will you take this pain away
 the way it's lookin' i don't wanna live another day
 i try to pray but lord i don't know what else to say
 for every sin one day i know i gotta pay
 that's why i'm on my knees askin' for help 'cause the
 life i'm living
 lord i know it's bad for my health
 but until that day lord you give me the light
 i'm keep on thinking why my mind ain't right

-Lil' Eli, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're praying in the right spirit, 'cause Jesus came to heal. So when you pray for healing, he's sure to hear it. You feel? It all begins with admitting you sinned, and you pray for the strength not to do it again. Getting your mind right will take time, but surrender to the spirit of forgiveness and you'll be fine. Give up the false pride you take in acting a demon, 'cause your mind can't get right while your soul is screamin' for help. You'll hear all about consequences of the negative kind, but surrender to love, mercy, pity, peace and love — to find the positive gift of real peace of mind. You were a slave to the street, but when you turn away, you defeat the devil and live for the day of your release, when you walk away from the system and the street to stay free.

Feel My World

i feel my world
is caving in on me
i feel i have no will to survive
i feel as if my life
is a test drive
i feel i have no one to guide
me through the tough times
'cause look at mine
i feel i'm running out of time
so for now i'm'a go
smart 'stead'a dumb

-Savage, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Props, we wanna give you some, 'cause you not only write some fine poetic lines that give us a taste of your personal hell, you also have the heart to pull yourself up to a higher level, and inspire your readers as well to fight the devil.

I Want Know

i want to know why
i want to know why all these
bad things happen to me
why do i do all the things i do
why am i where i am
why do people snitch on me
this world is a cold world
why is a good question 'cause
to tell you the truth
i don't know why

-Big Sterl, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Some things are a given, there will always be people snitching in the game. Why? It's the nature of the game. So you can end a lot of the bad things that are happening to you by ending your involvement in a scandalous and savage street game. Otherwise, it's jails, hospitals and death. So, take two steps: first, stop; then write about why you kept going back to a losing game (and you'll have plenty of answers but none good enough to justify making the same mistakes over and over).

why is a good question 'cause
to tell you the truth
i don't know why

I Want To Know Why

i want to know why they have me here
i want to know why they building a new hall
i want to know why they sending me to the 'y'
i want to know why am i'm in my room with a hour
i want to know why we didn't get our large muscles
[exercises]
i want to know why the raiders lost yesterday
i want to know why people always talking
i want to know why is it a war
i want to know why bush is the president
i want to know why people be stressing
i want to know why they haven't came and got me to
go to the 'y'

-Young Rickybo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If you're reading this in the Y, we want to know why someone so obviously intelligent and personable as you refused to even consider trying to change his life. You don't have to condemn yourself to cycles of serving time for the rest of your life. Why don't you believe it when we say — you could do anything? Why not try to get an education there? Get involved in job-training programs! Yeah, you can be the one with the baddest attitude, laughing at everyone else, but you could also find the courage to make something bigger and better of yourself — we really mean: for yourself. We're not saying some people are better than others but that you could do so

This Block

—Eli! What's up ninja? You out brah!
Yup!

—So what you 'bout to do now? The block miss you!

Yup! Well, but if the block missed a ninja, why y'all couldn't write a ninja or visit a ninja?

—So what you sayin'? You ain't wit' us?

Straight up, I'm to the neck, 'cause ain't none of y'all ninjas solid enough for me. I'm solid as a rock. Too solid to go back in jail! Too solid to claim this block! I'm not from this block or this world! I'm from my own world. So y'all ninjaz do what y'all do — I'm too militant for this shh!

-Lil' Eli, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Right on! And it takes a militant commitment to walk away from all the old bull that falls on you heavy as cement when you return from incarceration. All those boys that never called or wrote, that never dropped your family a c-note when they knew times got hard with you behind bars, they will all be back by your side, telling you the same old lies about down for life and got your back no matter what. And it's easier to believe their lies and go back to your old life, than it is to stay militant enough to do right, stay militant as Lil' Eli.

My Recipe For Success

What's up, Beat? How's life been treating you? This is Payne from Hayward, California. Today I'm going to be writing my recipe for success.

If I made my own recipe for success, the ingredients would be: (1) support mixed with encouragement, (2) a lot of education, (3) lots of money, (4) good people to hang out with that won't get you in trouble, and (4) a family to encourage and support me in living a successful life.

-Payne, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Right on, good recipe! Actually if you have the other ingredients you list, you may not need "lots of money" but just enough money to keep your loving family safe and secure. Don't let that dream of making lots of money have you doing things that have you losing those other key ingredients in your recipe for success!

A Recipe For Success

first you want one positive goal
a lot of thought, commitment's the key, sacrifice
you want about a heart's worth of courage
three-quarters a heart's worth of haters out your face
and for all you want to build a hustling
ambitious brain toward the lust of that
particular seed that you have in mind
plant it, treat it constantly with care
and watch it grow ... into ... success

-Mill, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Excellent piece you deliver to our Beat topic. We hope you follow through with your recipe towards success. What is your plan upon following this recipe?

I Want To Know Why...

i want to know why they throw juveniles in jail
deny commissary and don't give us bail
then the p o promises to help us out and do their best
but really they send us to group homes and camp
because they really couldn't care less
they keep us from our family and friends
is it because they just want to make money off us

-Torrin, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's true that the prison/industrial complex remains deeply committed to keeping jails full so that its product, incarceration, remains in demand. However, it's a mistake to ascribe these intentions to any individual PO. For one thing they don't get paid per detainee anyway. If you want to be back home, you need to change the things you're doing that society labels wrong. You don't have to believe in justice to see the law has teeth.

I'm Tired

i'm tired of this drunk-ass system telling me what to do
 i'm tired of me and my mom getting into arguments too
 i'm tired of these girls here talking trash
 i'm tired of getting room time fo' something petty ash
 that most of the time don't be my fault anyway
 i'm tired of miz winn leaving the unit everyday
 so these system folk can turn back to their regular ways
 'cause when she here they be frontin' super hard
 i'm tired of getting room time for having
 one extra tube of toothpaste in my cubby
 i'm tired of calling people on these collect phone calls
 because it's taking money out of my pockets y'all
 i'm tired of wearing these county clothes
 i'm tired of being sober
 i'm tired of these system folk being racist against their own culture
 and no i'm not racist if that's what you wonder
 i'm tired of this one staff in particular trying to be like d b
 i'm tired of being detained every time i go to court
 i'm tired of my p o giving me bad news every time he come' see me
 i'm tired of being here the system got me eff'd up

-Lil' Cookie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The only person you have power over is yourself. So it's most beneficial to you to take the spotlight off everyone else causing you problems and shine it on the part you play, regardless of whether you feel you're not "the one" at fault. When you sick and tired of feeling sick and tired, you're ready for a change. Have you heard the prayer: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

My Life Is So Wrong

my life is so wrong
 sometimes i don't want to go on
 the same days of pain
 come on me like rain
 couldn't stop it if i tried
 but if i said i'd tried
 — i lied
 out of all the free people on the streets
 one hundred and twenty of them dead
 forever on their final bed
 never to wake and see a sunrise
 or walk downtown and see a highrise
 my life is so wrong
 sometimes i don't want to go on

-Lil' Tb, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You said twice in your poem that "sometimes you don't want to go on" — what is all that about? You must! For your family! Trust us, everything is going to be cool. Just DO GOOD and trust that God is going to provide a way for you. . [The foregoing was written by a Beat teen typist who's been in the system, and though it's not part of his job description, we decided to let it stand, as is. However, we'd add:] It's like the part of you that lives that life without trying to change, does need to die inside your heart — 'cause it's time for you to make a new start. You don't have to believe it's possible today, but start the change and when you've traveled down that road of change a while — you can look back and see you've totally changed your life style even though you didn't think you could. It's as simple as: do good. Simple doesn't mean easy, but choose to do what you should.

Good News

Greetings Beat and Beat readers! I got a very good news in court. I ain't going to the "Y"! Hey, that's the best thing that could happen for everybody to hear — that you ain't going to the "Y" for a fact!

But there is a chance that you might go to a group home or Camp Sweeney. Hey, I just got out of Camp! That's the easiest thing to do for a placement and shh!! But hey this to everybody in here, boy or girl, stay out, do good, and take yo' ass to school and get it over wit' — and stop trying to be something you ain't.

-Boricua, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You need to not just preach those last words to the next ninja but take a good look in the mirror and preach them to yourself. God gave you a blessing, so stop messing.

Giving Thanks to My Mom

I would personally like to send a token of gratitude to my mother. No matter what the situation or circumstance, she stood by my side and pushed for me to do better. Every time I hit the bottom, she struggles to get me into a position to get back on track in life.

-Zachary, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your mother sounds patient and loving and strong. Don't let her always being there for you turn into an excuse not to take responsibility for yourself — in a positive way! Thank her by getting back on track to stay!

Get On The Good Foot!

i'm tired of waking up to the same
 james brown c-d everyday
 i'm tired of the ragged speaker
 that staff talk through everyday
 i'm tired of hearin' coach
 mouth every monday through friday
 i'm tired of being around fake people
 around fake-ass ninjas that don't know me
 i'm tired of doing the same thing everyday
 i'm tired of coming to juvenile hall
 so after i get out i'm not coming back

-Lil' Freddy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: In truth, if your whining about what all you're tired of here in the Hall, helps you make the changes in your thinking and actions (i.e., your decisions, your choices) on the outs so you can stay free, then it's all good — but we don't mean getting slicker, or you'll just come back quicker 'cause something always goes wrong before too long). And when coach talks, take the best and leave the rest, 'cause he's just trying to help you in his own fashion — plus he's got way more wisdom than you imagine!

Thank You Momma

i want to thank my momma
 for being there and doing what she can do
 i want to thank my momma
 for telling me to do the right thing
 and making sure i had whatever i wanted
 i want to thank my momma
 for taking care of me and my little brother
 i want to thank my momma
 for going to work everyday
 and doing what she's supposed to do
 and i appreciate everything she's doing for me

-Adanté, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You can't always get what you want, but when it comes to wanting to thank your mother in The Beat — you got it! Now don't just thank her with words, thank her with actions.

Back From ROP

What's poppin' Beat readers? This ya boy "Baby Jesus" coming at ya from these ALACO walls.

Yeah, I'm back in this mothafoncka for running from "ROP" (Rites of Passage)! Not only that, but I flucked around and caught a whole different case. Yeah, I already know it sounds all-bad for me! But hopefully the Judge will give me a blessin'. (Ha-ha-ha, that was funny, huh?)

Yeah, I already know I'm 'bout to hit the "Y" but I can't cry. All I can do is hope for the best and expect the worst. You feel me? I can lightweight say it was worth it, 'cause I was on the run for a few months. It was poppin' out there, boy! I can't complain.

Well, I'm'a cut this kite short. 'Till pencil meets paper! Oh yeah, to all behind these walls, keep ya head up and remain solid.

-Baby Jesus, 15 0Crew

From The Beat: We're sorry to see you facing the Y just because you wanted to be out there pumping adrenaline while you were on the run for three months. Maybe you're addicted to drama or something. You really need to take a look at that, 'cause otherwise you'll end up spending more time behind bars than free — living for those brief vacations from incarceration when you're out balling. We'd call it rather free-falling, 'cause you're continually setting yourself up for a fall — until you wake up and take responsibility for your calls.

To My Girl

I love you so much
I feel the warmth of your body with the slightest touch
You mean so much to me girl
To me, you're worth more than the whole world
You're always gonna be my lady
My heart is locked and you got the key
You are so pretty fine and sexy
I know you also love me
And I know that you care
And I know you like it when I brush your sweet brown hair
But now i'm in the hall
No longer with you at the park or in the mall
Now i'm looking at a picture of you on my wall
I can't kiss you, that's worst of all
I can't wait 'til I see you, you're so lovely
But still I wonder
How long will you wait for me?

-Lil' Mental, 150 Crew

From The Beat: After all your poems about the struggles of incarceration and drug addiction, it's nice to see that you can also write a love poem. Maybe for just this week, your nickname should be Lil' Sentimental?

I Want To Know Why

why are all these young people getting killed
i lost a lot of people these past five years
i lost my sister, my father, my big brother, my friend
my grandmother, my grandfather, and cousin
that's why when i was in the streets
i really didn't care if i lived or died
but since i came to the hall my mind has changed
i'm bout to go to boys' republic
and learn a trade in something or other
so i don't have to go back to what i was doing
and that is real talk.

-Lil' Joe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Man, you have been living so deep in hell, that getting locked up offered you a chance to stop and take a look at your life. It's natural to grieve the loss of so many loved ones, and who wouldn't lose a sense of direction or purpose in the face of all that. However, we offer you our most heartfelt congratulations on the positive attitude with which you're approaching your experience at Boys' Republic. You, that list of deceased are all people who loved (and many of us believe that while the body may die, the love does not) deeply. They all would want to see you doing better in life, and showing yourself some love, too!

i'm in the hall

No longer with you at the park

or in the mall

Now i'm looking at a picture of you

on my wall

I can't kiss you, that's worst of all

Life

Life's so sad
Life's got me mad.
Life's almost gone
Life's almost done
Life's worthless.
Life's only a pawn in this game of chess
Life's got me feeling hate.
Life in juvy is my fate
Life's got me in a cell
Life's sending me to hell.
Life saved me from being a Kingpin,
Life has now brought me to juvy, writing for The Beat
Within.
Life is excellent,
Life's the best thing, that's what I meant.

-Lil' Mental, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Another great piece... especially the way it moves from a dark view of life to a lighter one. It's like you use your gift as a poet to get us expecting one thing, and then Bam! you surprise us with two last lines that contradict everything you said before. Good work.

i wish i would have gone to school
and listened when i was young
people don't care how old you are
people will hurt you

To The youngsters

all y'all young ninjas in here pay attention
to what's going on in the streets
people are getting killed young
you don't have to listen
i know when i was young i didn't listen
but just watch the news
and it will tell you
i wish i would have gone to school
and listened when i was young
people don't care how old you are
people will hurt you
i got shot twice when i was sixteen
believe me that shhh hurt
you don't want to feel that
this is real talk

-Lil' Joe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This week you come with the realest talk that tells it like it is in the street. You speak from painful experience, and we hope the ones reading this piece who feel what you're saying, will decide it's time to change their lives — 'cause who wants to either live locked inside or get shot out on the street and maybe die? Well, sometimes the pain gets so great, a young man can lose all perspective and seem to no longer care if he lives or dies. But you, Lil' Joe, are showing the road back to sanity and the possibility of rejoining humanity as a productive and responsible citizen, 'cause you finally learned to listen!

Giving Thanks Where It's Due

I would like to thank my family for being there for me when I was struggling. I would like to thank my mom and my aunt, because I would be nowhere it wasn't for them and their motivation.

So I'd just like to thank them and let them know how feel. My mom always told me the right thing, but I didn't listen sometimes, trying act so smart and thinking I already knew it all!

-Lil' Chad, 150 Crew

From the Beat: It's nice for you to give thanks were it's owed. We're sure you put your mom through a lot, and we know she will love hearing that you appreciate everything she's done for you. It sounds like you're finally ready not only to start listening to your mom but also to recognize wisdom when you hear it. Beautiful — keep up the good work.

Thank You Moms

I'd like to thank moms for always being there on time.
I'd like to thank moms for not running off like Pops did.

I'd like to thank moms for doing all she could
even when I was doing bad in the hood.

I'd like to thank moms from now to the day that I'm gone.
I'd like to thank moms for being there from dusk 'till dawn.

I'll always thank moms!

-Lil' Chad, 150 Crew

From the Beat: We know your mom will love reading this piece. Make sure she sees it! But we'd also like to thank you on behalf of all Beat readers and writers whose moms have been there for them through thick and thin, 'cause your poem offers them all proper recognition long overdue. So, thank you.

*My mom always told me
the right thing,
but I didn't listen**Trust in a Relationship: You Need It*

Damn, i'm sitting here in this cell, nothin' but a pillow, blankets and pictures. As I look at my pictures of my my mamas. I start thinkin' like, damn, I be thinkin' about the good times the bad times, and the love we shared. That shhhh is hella special. I don't know. But you can say that I'm in love. I really don't give a ...

But yeah I was on the outs I was hella strict with her. But as i'm in here I'm more strict. You feel me, i was just talkin' to her and was talkin' and we got into an argument and shhhh, and she ask me if I trust her, and I said, "I been trustin' you!" And then she said that I never did, I was like, damn, whatever.

She once told me before that what is a relationship without trust, there's not a relationship.

I'm like, how am I supposed to trust you if you keep on doin' the shhhh I don't want you to do?

But anyways, we gon' through some hard times. But it's good, and it's gon' get better.

-Mike Jonez, 150 Crew

From The Beat: They say that loving another person is the hardest thing we'll ever do in our lives, and it definitely sounds as if your life with your girl is being tested, not just by your present situation and future fears but also by the wounds from the past.... How did you first meet, what do you love most about her, how did you first meet, and when did you both first start struggling with questions of trust?

No Matter What

I know it seems hard sometimes but remember one thing. Through every dark night, there's a bright day after that. So no matter how hard it gets, stick your chest out keep yo' head up and handle it. Good luck to all the people that are going through a rough time and one love to my lil bruh bruh. I love you.

-Mike Jonez, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thanks for these positive words — especially coming from you during these dark days. The advice you give is the advice you must follow, and the luck you wish for others is the luck we wish back to you. Peace.

Still Alive

Yo', what up wit' it? Me, just here at Camp, chillin' with The Beat Within. Well, check this stuff out yo'!

The other day I was with my little bro', and I ran into a homie I haven't seen in two years, right. When I seen my homie, he looked at me like he seen a ghost! It's a trip! Because I guess one of his friends had called him up and told him I was dead!

Man, I don't know if someone is playing around or what, but that's what happens when you live a bad life. Sometimes I wish I didn't do the things I did. Well, at least I'm doing good now and that what counts. Well, until next time, it's your formerly crazy Uncle Fairlas signing off. Lastly, live you life and nobody else's.

-Fairlas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Man, that is a trip, but you know how people talk! Think about fully changing your life so that you don't have to be involved with people who spread dangerous lies just to have something to say. We don't know if you ever look at life this way, but you might see it as a warning from God — or simply a warning that if you continue to live the life you were living, you will be dead soon. You say you're "doing good now" and that's way cool, but when you're out and you slip, don't just quit on yourself like a fool — use your brain and get back on track ASAP 'cause clear thinking is the best tool you'll ever see. And when you see a connection on the outside between messing up and getting high — it's time to give sobriety a try. It truly is a matter of life or death, and we know you're not ready for your last breath. Much love and respect.

Rest In Peace To My Homie

rest in peace to my homie who died in the streets
you wasn't a fake homie you was a gee
rest in peace to my homies from the v-w-z*
say rest in peace for your homies if you're feeling me
blowing trees everyday damn i miss those things
i remember the day they told me you died to the streets
i fell to my knees and started to scream
damn i wish that bullet had hit me
that way you'd be here today instead of me
but most of all i wish you was here right next to me
you was mi carnal and we did everything to stay on top
anybody disrespected us they was askin' to get dropped
it ain't been the same since the day you left me
i wish you were here to have my back gee
you were a close friend and that's a fact for me
i'd do anything to bring you back
i miss you so much i'm crying on the track
in your memory i'm a smoke an ounce to that
and i love you homie for a fact
it's the truth and i'll put that on my life
but now i have to wait to see you in paradise
rest in peace to my homie who died in the streets
you wasn't a fake homie you was a gee
rest in peace to my homies from the v-w-z*
say rest in peace for your homies if you're feeling me
you wasn't a fake homie you was real to me
[*the v-w-z = the varrio war zone]

-Fairlas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Terrific piece! We can tell you love your friend forever and a day, and we are sorry to hear he passed away. It's a good thing to remember him and what you were together, but try not to let that hold you down from changing for the better. Fighting to stay on top of a game that a few may win for a min' but all lose big time in the end, reminds you of the love you had for your friend — but you need to separate your love for him from your life of sin. One was true, the other false; one leads straight to heaven, the other to hell's halls. Become a peacemaker in your life time, and offer your little brother a chance of not dyin' in the street like your friend — you can start to make amends for your sins by becoming a new man within and without. When you change mind and heart within, then act that change out, your brother will witness it without a doubt. And all those who know you, will see how change can come about. The cowards will call you coward, but those with courage to face the truth will seek you out — and follow you. Pray your little brother will be one of them, too! For who else can lead him away from danger but you?

What Keeps Me From Being Free

What keeps me from being free I will say is my friends, because once you start being with your gang friends, you end up in Juvenile Hall. Sometimes being hard does not have to be in a gang. I say being hard means having a job, being somebody, like move on with your life and ignore the friends that are not your friends.

-Jetas

From The Beat: You know the formula for success (or at least the formula for avoiding failure), but knowledge is not enough. You have to couple that knowledge to a commitment, a promise to do what you know is going to benefit you and not to do what you know is going to bring you down. Keeping that promise is the hard part, even when you know it's the right thing to do. We agree with your definition of being "hard." We think young people too often think the easy way is the best way, when in fact it's the hard choices that will help them in the future. In fact, we think it takes real strength (being hard?) to show your decent and gentle side. Sometimes, standing up to your friends makes you stronger than the biggest thug on the block.

What Is Your Definition Of Freedom

Well, my definition of freedom is getting out of juvenile hall and facing the real life. My other definition of freedom is mentally free. For example, not to be ever mad or sad for something or stressing or grieving about life. Also, sometimes death can be freedom to other people to get away from basic life.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: We wish you had put your name to this piece. It's important to write what you feel, but it's also important to own what you write... We know of nobody who is never mad or sad, so does that mean that real freedom does not exist? Since nobody has ever come back from death, we don't know for sure if it's freedom or slavery. But one thing we do know is that people who find their freedom in death leave many, many people behind never to be free from their grief and pain.

Nobody's Firme

Nobody these days is firme or fiel (strong or faithful)

I'm talking about these Vatos/Rucas today

For Rucas: It sounds more bad for them to be messing around with hella dudes.

But for us vatos, messing around with hella girls is different, "que no"

So what I am trying to say that they are supposed to be ladies not some females that are known as "B" (on the street)

So us, we supposed to be pimpin "que no"

Be a leader on the game

We supposed to be controlling it, you feel me. Why?

Because when we get older and have our own wife or a ruca called lady

but around the homies called your girl.

We supposed to have them females that will but you whatever you want

and take you everywhere and que no sea selosa (not be jealous) you feel me.

Because if you're a pimp you have more than one

-Lil Vato

From The Beat: Why should it be different for girls who mess with a lot of boys than for boys who mess with a lot of girls? Who makes the "rules" that you're quoting here to live by? Why should females be held to one standard but males to a different standard? Isn't this just a way for boys to keep control? What would you say about a society where girls could sleep with as many boys as they wanted and be known as "Players" while boys who slept with more than one girl would be called loose or low life? You have described the world as you know it, but you haven't explained why the world is that way or whether it should be that way. If Latinos and Blacks and Asians and Whites are equal, then why aren't women the equal of men?

Definition Of Freedom

My definition for freedom is not only being free on the outs, but to be free from peer pressure, free from crime, you feel me... not having to watch over my shoulder every day.

-D-Boy

From The Beat: Good for you for going farther than most in describing freedom. Yes, it's more than getting out of here because many, many people out there are not free either. What other things can you think of that keep you from being free?

I Thought I Knew You

I thought I knew you, but when I needed your help you were nowhere to be found. Every time I see you, you act like you are down with me. When I am in critical situations, it seems like you're running away. Now I know smiles can be deceiving and they aren't what you think. It's better to be quiet and listen and watch out for your enemies and your true friends.

-Nacho

From The Beat: Being quiet and listening is good advice most of the time — and something that most of us don't do very well. Do you think your friend is being dishonest with you, or just wants to avoid getting entangled in the kind of actions that lead you here? When you are quiet and listening, do you ever hear things that surprise you, either from your friends or your enemies? Like what?

Freedom

Freedom is good, freedom is gold

Freedom is everything

Freedom is a chance

A chance to think if new plans

Freedom brings joy

Freedom reminds me of when I was small and Christmas came and I opened a new toy

Freedom is an opportunity

An opportunity to make smarter decisions

Freedom is a dream for lifers in prison

-Young Soulja

From The Beat: This is a very sweet poem, even though it is also a sad one because you are writing this from behind walls! We like that you remembered the lifers in prison and their daily dream of freedom. But mostly, we love the image of you as a child opening up a new toy at Christmas.

I Thought You Knew

I thought you knew but I guess you didn't

Now our relationship is through

But being dead would be no different

If you think I don't care

You got me twisted

And we never spent any time together

Nope not even on Christmas

-Daniel

From The Beat: There is something mysterious about this tight little poem, Daniel. We're not sure who you're addressing, but we don't understand how a "relationship" that is defined as spending no time together can come to an end... It's clear that this ending has hurt you, but it's not clear what ending you're talking about.

My Situation

My situation is I was pulled from my home and I was placed in a group home, where I didn't feel I had a lot of the freedom I used to have. So I dealt with that by thinking of the future and how I will have all my freedom back once more.

-Terrance

From The Beat: When you were thinking of your future freedom, Terrance, were you thinking of picking up where you left off, and just continuing down the same path you've been walking, or were you considering some changes? If you imagine yourself five years from now, what do you see?

What Is Freedom?

The definition of freedom is when you kick it with your homies. The definition of freedom is when you are out of the hall and you could be with your mom and your family. When you have freedom you could go anywhere you want, like your 'hood and stuff, so be cool. Late.

-Little Roach

From The Beat: This is not a bad definition of freedom, Little Roach, but is there more to it than this? Is anybody 100% free? What holds us back from being free? Should we be 100% free? If my freedom to do what I want keeps you from exercising your freedom to do what you want, how can we live together unless both of us agree to certain limits on our freedom? These are just a few thoughts we wish you had addressed in this piece.

Lose My Feet

If I were every to lose my feet in a car accident, I would be really depressed. Why? Because it's my feet and it's really important to me. It gets me from A through Z. It really doesn't matter which part of the body it is. It could be my hands. It would still be hard for me to pull through because how would I eat or wash myself? I think it's all the same thing. You can catch a L and you wouldn't know what to do. I think when your girl gets pregnant, it's the same thing because you would have to do everything you can to raise that kid.

-Antonio

From The Beat: We understand why you wouldn't want to lose any part of your body, and why you would feel depressed if you did. But do you think people who do lose an arm or leg, or are blind or deaf, are depressed their whole lives? Or do you think they learn to live with whatever they've got? The question we asked is how would you live with such a major change in your life.

Waiting...

You thought that you knew me but you were wrong.

I feel that I've been away from my homies too long. The only person I get to see in here is my mom.

You thought you knew me but you were wrong.

I just ant wait to go post with the homeboys all night long

Like shhh ain't wrong

-Creepier

From The Beat: Who is the "you" in this poem that doesn't know you? It seems like you just strung words together to make a rhyme, but words that don't really make a lot of sense. But we get the point: you want to be posting with your homies. So, we just have to wait for you to grow up a little and realize that when little boys post on the street "like shhh ain't wrong," they're writing their own ticket to be swept up again and taken from the block, their friends, and their family. That is what happened to you, but you're still pointing your finger at "them" for putting you here, while announcing that you'll be putting yourself here again! We don't know what you need to experience to add a little adult responsibility to your thinking process, but we fear that — unless you start thinking about more productive efforts like going to school and respecting your family — y

I Thought I Knew You But...

I thought I knew you, but I guess I don't. I mean when we did our crime, I thought that we were going to do our time here. But you punked out and went to get transferred to San Francisco YGC. Anyway, it's all up to the judge!

-Cordero

From The Beat: Right, it's all up to the judge, so whoever your crime partner was, if he's in a different facility it's not his choice but the judge's. To change the subject slightly, when you think back on that crime, Cordero, from the inside of your "room," do you think it was worth it?

For All The Youngsters

Am going to say a few words,
and I'ma do it like this.

Here we go
Let me go

Coming though in the low
Bust a couple of flows

Just for all a yo' homitos joitas rucas (little homies and girls)
And I remember when I used to be in the streets with my cousin Coco.
I love my cousin a lot but the bad thing is that I am not chilling with him.

He's not an O.G. but he has respect from a lot of homies.
Whoever don't like him just let me know instead of talking shhh behind his back.
I remember the first time I did coca/mota was with him, we used to do hella shhh together.

I miss you bra and when you get out I am going to get out too.
We are going to kick it like the old days.

I mean like when we were youngsters desmadrosos, mentirosos, rateros y culeros (troublemakers, liars,
thieves and screw-ups)

I remember all the days when he used to fight just for fun, sofocar vatos (bother guys) out of the cuts.
Much love and respect for the primo Cocoy. That he's not around

Hopefully you do good and get out soon. Late carnal.

-Lil' Vato

From The Beat: You can never recapture those days when you were just a boy doing boy things without concern for consequences. You're almost a man, and with that territory comes added responsibilities. Getting out (soon or late) is a certainty, but staying out is not. That requires you to think like an adult and act like an adult. Are you up to the task?

My Definition Of Freedom

My definition of freedom is being free of all worries. Not being trapped, just happy. To be happy is all on you. What makes me happy is helping other people be happy, so in other words, I get happiness off of other people's happiness. This world is two things, good and evil, and you're either going to follow the good path or the bad path. It's all on you.

My job is to show people the good path and help them see through the evil. My life means to me many things... well two main things: Love and Peace. To all the gangsters out there, if you want to bang, go to the army or something. You are living for something wrong and stupid. You're being a hater. How can you hate someone you don't even know?

Why carry guns? You know why people carry guns? I do. It's because they are scared! A drug dealer carries a gun so he won't get his money or drugs jacked. He feels he's not in the physical shape to fight, especially when cops carry guns. So he carries a gun to protect himself because he feels weak and unprotected. I myself do not need to carry a gun because I am not scared or weak, and I am already protected by God. God protects we wherever I go. Hopefully one day you will be able to see that and not be blinded by the angel of darkness.

-Makdeezyaya

From The Beat: Do you really see the world (and yourself) in such stark black-and-white terms? Are people either good or evil, or are they both good and evil? If God created us all, then aren't we all given the same potential for both good and evil? When you examine your own mind and heart, don't you find good competing with bad for your attentions? You say you're either going to follow the good path or the bad path, but can't you follow both paths at different times? Doesn't that dark angel seduce all of us at one time or another? Anyway, we're very glad that you have found the faith that let's you live your life without arming yourself with a weapon, and sees his role as helping others. There is nothing more noble than that.

Afraid To Lose You

When I first met you I was afraid to be your friend.
When I became your friend I was afraid to hold your hand.

When I hold your hand I was afraid to be your lady.
When I became your lady I was afraid to kiss you.

When I first kissed you, I was afraid to love you.

And now that I love you, I'm afraid to lose you!

-Tiny

From The Beat: We love the way this poem builds up to that final fear, Tiny. We hope that you can put all this into perspective and realize that at each stage of your relationship, you feared it would be over, but each time you moved to a higher stage. Let that pattern continue, and try not to fear the future. Qué sera sera.

I Reminisce

Hey, what's up? This song is dedicated to my homie Guero who passed away and is dedicated to his familia and everyone who lost someone out there. Rest in peace. I know you're looking down on me homie, I know it. Rest In Peace. Gracias for everything homie, I'll miss you. Alrato.

I reminisce about back in the days carnal. We used to kick it in the playground and lift weights, carnal. I wonder why you had to leave my side. Your memories on my mind every day and night. All of the time. It's hard, Guero, putting these words in this song 'cause now you're gone and I'm all alone, suicidal thoughts just rolling through my dome.

I love you Guero. I miss you. I wish you were here. I remember you homie. I remember you homie.

Ese, I remember like if it was yesterday. Always been missed

-Cuervo

From The Beat: In this terribly sad piece, Cuervo, you have captured the very essence of permanent loss! From children kicking it in the playground to boys with guns playing a "game" with no winners, but only losers. And who are the losers? Are they the poor boys like Guero who thought he was on top... until he was put to rest? Or, are they the poor girls and boys (like you) who are left behind to cry, to try to deal with the painful emotions of loss, who are left with only memories — and who have to find the courage to live?

How Will You Feel

You live or are living the life like a soldado haciendo crimes peliando, fumando (a soldier doing crimes, fighting, smoking) going to parties having fun, but then you kill or you fight or even steal and get strikes. But you think it's fun because we are minors. But once you get older and you do a crime, you just sitting there waiting for the judge to say that you got 25 with an "L." You just gonna be thinking about your family and friends, and next thing you know your freedom is gone for thinking that gangs is not a game. We only have one life. We don't have two lives like Playstation. So think about the people that are doing 25 with an "L". Tell me how will you feel of you are getting life and you fighting and stabbing just to be alive.

-Lil' Vato

From The Beat: Now you're talking, Lil' Vato. You've said everything that we would want to say, which is that it's easy when you're young not to think about consequences (even when you have to live some of those consequences), but not thinking about them doesn't keep them from happening. So now is the time to think, and we're so happy that that's what you are doing! Keep thinking!

Dreams

Everybody around the world has dreams. Even cholos that walk around the streets. So it makes no difference of what you want to be like a farmero, rapper, rapero o un cholo que agara dinero (a farmer, rapper, or gangster who gets his money). So don't lose hope of what you got because no matter what always pray to God. Don't let anyone put chu down because at the end, you are the one still standing on the ground instead of dodging bullets and resting in peace. You all be making money like a "G"

-D and Lil' Vato

From The Beat: We don't know if you are two people (Demon and Lil' Vato) or just Lil' Vato, but we love part of this piece and hate part of it. The part we love is the sentence that begins the piece: "Everybody around the world has dreams." Yes, that is one of the things that distinguishes us as human beings — we can dream about the future, about how we'd like our lives to go, about what we're going to eat for dinner. But your last line we don't care for because so many young people (your age and younger) have paid with their lives to "make money like a G." Most of the money made by a "G" goes into the pockets of people with 9-5 jobs, families, and a house they're still paying a mortgage on, and they thank you and all the "Gs" for making it so easy for them to make a living... off of you!

Why Homeboys Are Gone

I wish I could tell the homies that died
How much I wanted to kick it with them
And how much love and respect they had
Also that they had a lot to do out here
We ên el mundo (on the earth) have birth, life, oxygen
And then family, then we die... shhhh
Some people don't even make a new family
Some people don't even make it to an OG

Why they had to go

Why homeboys are gone

Why they had to die at a very young age

Why I didn't have a chance to know them better

We ride till the day that we die

We are not like them peces (fish) that are banging

Part time — We called part-time bangers

Not cholos, not true cholos

Us ones are real cholos, that's why we all equal
carnales

Some days I wish I could die

So I could kick it with the homeboys

Get high, get high

-Lil' Vato

From The Beat: Why are you asking questions when the answers are so plain and clear? We hate to see so many young boys being killed in these mean streets, paying the ultimate price for a "game" that no one can possibly win. But it is in playing that game that you put yourself in harm's way. Here, you boast about being a true banger, not a part-timer one, but we've seen people's lives change in an instant, either because they are killed or they are paralyzed or they are put in a box for years and years and years. If you put yourself in places where bullets are flying, you are very likely to end up six feet under! There is no mystery about it, so we'd like it more if you spent some time trying to answer the questions you ask rather than just ask them! Whether you wish for it or not, death will come to you as it comes to every living thing. But if you believe in God, then why not let His plan develop in its own way? Why hurry things up?

When It's Over

A man is never dead until he is truly forgotten.

-RLK

From The Beat: This one sentence is a profoundly deep thought. But a thought is nothing more than a thought until you add explanation, detail, experience, examples. What do you mean? How did you come up with this thought? The point is this: You have almost a full hour to think about what you want to write, and then to write it. In that time, you only managed to come up with ten words! So our message is a simple one: Don't be lazy. Challenge yourself. Don't settle for what's easy. Get below the surface. Dig!

Can't Funk Without Fightin'

I hate the white folks that stay on my back
 They came an took me out the hood
 And I don't know when I'm goin' back
 And I hate all suckas that wanna talk behind me
 Knowin' if they wanted me they know where to find me.
 And I hate when they say what my ninja Miguel ain't
 An' he gone' but we all know that he was
 And he was my potna an' I wish we could kick it wit' purp.
 But I'm locked up now,
 everybody got a problem wit' just me
 Is it because I had the baddest girl in Berkeley?
 But besides that point
 I got a real family split the money wit' my bra no bull, we a famly.
 Now it is what it is and you can like it or leave it.
 An' i got a family first tat, You can read it or leave it
 Ninjas actin' like females hatin' fo no reason
 You can't funk without fighting you all ain't peepin' man.

-Capo

From The Beat: Everything is in this flow of yours, Capo, your lost loved ones, your girl, your rage, the violence of the lifestyle you chose – and of course your raw talent with words. We feel like there's even more to you than this – and we're looking forward to seeing you step up and go deeper... who do you love in this world? What is your struggle? Where are you going in life? What do you see when you look out your window on the outs, and in here? We challenge you to step up to these questions.

I Want To Know Why

I want to know why I'm in here and didn't even commit a crime this time. I don't know why I was brought to jail for being late to school. It's not like I was missing school, I was just late.

Nowadays it seems like they try to find any way to lock us youngsters up. They act like we're animals and they can just lock us in cages.

I think that if our probation officers took a walk in our shoes for a month they would change some of the things they do to us and the way they do it.

-Hellboy

From the Beat: You speak truth: another reminder of the unjust ways of the juvenile system. Don't let the system discourage you! Keep going to school, and look for people who can be supportive.

'Ay Brah!

from the streets to the hall and now at camp sweeney
 grinding, hitting licks — the streets was in me
 don't think i'm a sucka unless ya trippin'
 rocks i was flippin' ten years in the dope game pimpin'
 ninjas zippin' cadillacs dippin' you think i was slippin'
 you ain't listenin' 'cause that ain't why i'm quittin'
 ain't nothing but fast-money-chasin' in town business
 can't mess with snitches, they be too much of a witness
 locked up for months and i no longer act suspicious
 did three robberies — why she keep botherin' me
 now she tryin' to come through with a bottle of hennessy
 she always tryin' to get with me —
 too high to do chemistry, 'bout to go dumb
 show you how i stunt, fifteen's in the trunk
 spark up a blunt, six-by-nine's in the front
 yolkin' a cadi, smokin' a fatty, girl we on a mission
 'money in the kitchen, smoked purp' for a livin'
 'cause it was part of my religion
 yeah we stayed grinding and always stayed shining
 iced-out grill — doin' bug timing
 in the west and the east, north and the south
 thinkin' you hard, what yo' click be 'bout
 hush yo' mouth, this lil' t, and hey i'm out

-Lil' T

From The Beat: There is a better way of life out there with more than riding the hood, blowing trees — the whole world could be your playground! So why stay grinding on the spot, in and out of the system's lock up? Even though you do say you're quitting in that one line, you sound way to in love with the grind, addicted to the street and chained to the game like those shackles on your feet. You thought you were all that and a bag of chips, but if you don't stick to the notion that you can quit, you'll find yourself neck deep in it and going down for the last time. With all your intelligence, all your heart, soul and mind, you better stick to the plan, man, and resign — quit, go legit, and make a new start, or all that big pimpin' will fall apart when you face serious charges as your reward and catch time that's seriously hard. And that's only if you get that far, 'cause too many would-be rock stars get buried six feet deep under the bloody sign of Mars, god of perpetual war who'd rather see you dead than reborn as a new man instead. You may love the game, but the game don't love you — and you need to understand, every player in the game gets played, right down to the very last man.

What I Hate

I hate ninjas that snitch
 Ninjas is straight poodles
 I treat ninjas like noodles
 What a ninja wanna see a ninja in jail
 Then a ninja like me can't get bail
 I'm tryna live life right
 Not ninjas coming to testify
 It's all hood, feel me
 Shhh ain't gone change
 But ninjas snitch
 That's why they get bagged
 If you know what I mean,
 I gotta get that green
 I hate snitches.

-Lil' Suave

From The Beat: For months and months, you've written poems that seem to be variations on a theme: You hate snitches, you need riches, you need that green, you all hood, it's all good.... this kind of writing doesn't say a word about who you really are, what you really want in life, what first got you caught up, what you see when you look at this world around you and try to make sense of it. ... these poems barely even scratch the surface of who you are... anyone could have written them. When are you going to dig deep and write something real?

Why Am I Here

i want to know why i'm here
 i shouldn't be here
 i wasn't raised to come to jail
 i was raised to do good
 make something out of my life
 i hate for me to do nothing
 with my life
 plus i couldn't see myself
 being poor
 out on the street
 asking for some change
 the only change i ask for
 is the change i can give myself
 and that change is going to
 get me to where
 i want to go

-JrOne

From the Beat: Were your only choices robbing, slanging or begging? You are in here because you made the wrong choice, but only you know what the right choice might have been. Even if there was no right choice then, your stay at Camp now provides you an opportunity to use the tools offered by the program to help get you ready to find a right choice after your release — but then, it's still up to you to make that right choice. We know people with jobs out there waiting for them, who still make the wrong choice. We're not saying it's easy, but it's all on you now.

Stop Fast

I been in jail for a month and a half, and I realize that what I been doing I have to stop fast, because it's not going to do nothing but leave me in jail or get me killed.

When I get out of here I'm going to finish playing basketball and football.

-Adolfo

From The Beat: It's good to have something to look forward to ... when did you first get into sports. If you had to choose one or the other, which would it be? And do you think sports could be your ticket out? Not just because colleges give scholarships, but also because being part of an athletic team gives you an alternative to street living.

At Camp

Lil' Cartier is the name! What it do? Me, shhh, locked up in Camp. I've been at the Camp house for like six months now. At first I was at the Hall for like two-and-a-half months, so I've been locked up for like eight-and-a-half months all totaled!

Anyways, it's not much up here. Ninjas is fake, talking 'bout what they bust and what they do on the outs.

-Cartier

From The Beat: It sounds like Camp doesn't bother you a lot anymore, which can only mean one thing — you are ready for the outs! Just one bit of advise though, try to change all of your small habits concerning hanging out on the block with that squad you were slanging dope with. You know that you're old enough now to get a legal (legit) job. You're not that little 'hood rat that needed a mob to watch his back and help him get money. Get a part-time job. Get a high school degree (or GED) so you can get a better job. Then maybe some college credits to get an even better job, 'cause you've already outgrown hustling with your team. Forget that!

Two More Weeks

I got two weeks until I get out! I'm excited to be getting out soon. I'm going to have a big party! I'm going to invite all my friends and family.

This the first and the last time I'll ever be locked up. I'm going to get my GED and go on to college — and get a good job so I can take care of my kids and my girlfriend. I'm going to spend a lot of time with my son, because I missed out on a lot of things he did while I was gone.

These are the things I'm going to do when I get out.

-Noodle

From the Beat: Sounds like a fun party and a good plan — stick to it and I'm sure everything will work out fine. Keep up the positive attitude and start putting in the work. And when you get frustrated or disappointed, try this prayer: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." We know you can do it! Much love and respect.

That First Taste

Man, when I take that first drink, I might as well have been drinkin' all day — because it just makes me want to drink all day! I think that is my problem.

I keep drinking until it hits me and everything is spinning. Then in a couple minutes after that, I am yackin' hard. But even though I throw up and fell bad, I just love drinking! It makes me think about the time I'm in that's not yesterday or tomorrow. It's a bad habit, and I have to get control before it messes me up or makes me mess someone else up.

-Lil' Boxer

From The Beat: Drinking obsessively isn't good for anyone. Have you thought of ways that can help you stop? Keep writing, for the more you talk about it, the clearer you will be on how to deal. Have you ever heard the phrase: "One is too many and a thousand never enough." It was coined by alcoholics who decided to get on top of the problem. It may not be forever, but for now — you need to try abstinence for an extended period of time. Then, you may find that your life is so much better that you don't want to go back to messing it up behind your thirst for mindlessness. Meanwhile, staying abstinent no matter what, practice living in the present moment, 'cause if you live with one foot in the future and one foot in the past — you're pissing on the present. Put all that past and future thinking into your writing, along with analyzing how you're handling yourself day by day. Then file it away in the back of your mind and live in present time.

Thanksgiving

Well, I was looking forward to Thanksgiving. I was gonna get to go have it with my family. But I messed that up, because I just got to have my first home visit and I came back bent — I mean, I was hella drunk.

Now that I think about that day, if I could go back and do it again, I wouldn't even go to my homie's house. I would just kick it with my fam', so I wouldn't have to sit up here over Thanksgiving, while all my homies and family sit at home eating fat.

Well, I learned my lesson. So when I get my home visits back, I'm gonna be coo' and not come back drunk.

-Lil' Boxer

From The Beat: It's nice to see you have learned your lesson. Now you know what will happen if you mess up. Keep up the positive attitude. The best way to keep from messing up is to build good habits (just like the easiest way to keep messing up is to have bad habits), because there will always come a time when your thoughtful self slips ... and then you do what you "always" do without thinking — for better or worse. Good habits make better a more likely outcome. You feel? Of course, habits are built day by day, so in the mean time, just do the right thing just for today.

Hate

I hate this place
forget this camp
I can't wait till I get out
to my loved ones
I hate all these ninjas
in camp except for
the homies and
a coupla other folks
only the solid ones
those are the ones that keep it real
so forget all the other ninjas out here
i'm out.

-Lil' Soldier

From the Beat: The hardest thing about Camp is your peer group — their attitudes, what they say, how they act. They make it way harder than staff does! It's so hard to see past them in order to take advantage of what the Camp program has to offer. Are you in the GED class? We know you're in school. Stay busy. Enroll in every program you can get into, and volunteer to be a worker — the commitment passes more quickly and you spend less time with fools and their idle talk. Of course, it'll be great to get out, but in the meantime, don't just waste your time, use it!

My Biggest Regret

I have only one regret
And that's bein in Juvy and getting treated like a pet
But I did what I did
That stupid kid
But I confessed, so I got caught honorably
I didn't go hide and I didn't flee
All the witnesses say it was me
So I was responsible and I pled guilty
Now my max is seven years
But still I have no fears
I hate this feeling, I hate regret
this is the first time regret and I have ever met.

-Lil Mental

From The Beat: It is honorable that you confessed what you did, and that you're not hiding, but is your regret for your action, or for your sentencing? Think for a minute about the miracle that is the human body — the way muscles work together, the way the heart remembers to beat, the way the brain constantly sends messages back and forth to every part of the body, the way blood carries oxygen all the way through us. The person you stabbed, no matter what he did or said, is still an example of that miracle, the miracle of life. And your knife went against it, your knife tried to stop that miracle. Do you feel no regret for that?

What It Do Beat?

What it do Beat? This is your girl baby girl coming from them hard streets of Oakland, California here to say I just got out to go to this group home at in Reddings, I run to go see my ninja and my lil' girl out in Oakland at my house, then my lil' girl was so cute and my ninja end up going to jail that night when I came and run for that group home just to see him all the way from Redding and that just is messed up.

Then these boys is up in this juvenile hall thinking that they can get at me. I don't think so will see you guys later.

-Jacqueline

From The Beat: We're not sure what the moral of this story is, other than that you should do your program and stay out of trouble so both your baby's parents don't wind up in jail at the same time, leaving an innocent baby without either parent. We are getting so fed up about hearing how cute all your damn babies are and how much you love them. Babies aren't toys, their people who need a lot of care (love), attention and security. You are in the process of seriously screwing your child up. Why don't you do the right thing and be a mamma. If you're old enough to have a baby, you better be old enough to take care of one.

When We Went Bad

Yeah, this Mar Mar comin' at y'all from Camp Sweeney. This program is super easy — you go home every weekend!

On my block, me and my cousin, we the leaders, but there's also my sis' and my girl — they get down, too. But we started goin' bad because my little brother, Lil' Meech, got killed! Then we really went bad when Meezy got killed, too! Ninjas was hurt when all this stuff started happening, but we stay solid in memory of Meech and Meezy.

-Mar Mar

From the Beat: Sounds like it's pretty tough times on the block right now! How do you think it will get better? Not by seeking revenge, 'cause that'll just keep the killing wheel turning — and two is enough! Whoever did it, will get what's coming to them, and you don't need to be the one taking a fall 'cause you answered the call for revenge. Believe, they will get theirs in the end. That's what the Bible means when it says, "Vengeance belongs to the Lord." So stop going bad, and stay solid in your love for each other. You need each other more than ever now. Stop worrying so much about how to get down, and things will start to look up. RIP Lil' Meech and Meezy.

A Grade Below F

I'm tired of people telling me...
that I'm not good but if you could see through my eyes...
you wish you would, just look and you will see,
I'm addicted, that's just me, a grade below F: I'm a G.

-Wheazie-wop

From The Beat: Great line. We're gonna hold on to your writings, so we can say "we knew him when"

Tired

What's up Beat, this is Derrick. Man I'm tired of people telling me I'm a bad influence on people. I may do certain things around people like smoke. I don't provoke or support their habit. The way they say it, it's like I make them do it. I have no control over what nobody does. The advertising on TV is to blame not me.

-Derrick

From The Beat: True, true. There is no excuse for anyone to smoke if they don't want to. Good point. But do you think it is good for you?

Some Things I Respect and Believe

BW: What are you sick of hearing?

TR: I'm sick of hearing the system telling me what to do.

BW: Ok that's in here. What are you sick of on the outs?

TR: I'm sick of people hating on material things they can get by hustling.

BW: What are you expecting or fearing tomorrow in court?

TR: I'm lightweight nervous because I don't know what the judge is thinking of me for running from placement to placement.

BW: What do you wish the judge could understand?

TR: That I'm not a bad kid and I could make better choices if I had a dad that could tell me how to conduct myself. I see him but I don't spend time with him like a son should.

BW: What do you wish about your dad? If you could tell him...

TR: That I'd like to spend time together like father and son.

BW: We wish he could hear that! You deserve a father's love and respect. Do you respect him?

TR: I can't say I respect him because he doesn't spend time with me.

BW: Who is the person you most respect in the world?

TR: I respect my mom because she's been there since day one.

BW: What do you wish you could tell or give her?

TR: I wish I could give my momma the world. I feel crazy for being here three months.

BW: What do you want to do for your mom when you get out? One thing....

TR: I want to be there for my mom and help her around the house and all that good stuff.

-Baby T

From the Beat: How lucky your mother is to have your respect and love. How unlucky your father is! It might seem like you are the unlucky one, but you can find father figures out there in the world, especially since you have a supportive mother to guide you. But he can never enjoy a son's love and respect. He is losing out on so much. We think you have the courage to find a father figure, and we hope it happens for you soon!

Back

This is your girl baby girl coming from them Oakland streets. I just got back form a group home. I was only out for three/four weeks and now I'm back for running from that group home and now I wish I can see my family and my lil girl who is eight months without my love one more time and her father is in jail now and she is with my mother now out in Oakland and I miss my lil' girl so much that I need to stop coming to this juvenile hall, or I will end up in the new juvenile hall when it opens. I'll see you later.

-Baby Gurl

From The Beat: What small place is it in you that you can find that is not selfish, that is not about you and is actually about your little girl? How will you understand that being a parent is about sacrifices. You can sacrifice your own desire to do whatever it is you want to do (running from group home, violating, etc.) or you can keep doing for yourself and sacrifice the well being and happiness of your daughter. It's your choice, but make no mistake, when that little girl is locked up in jail like you, it will be no one's fault but yours.

They Think You're A Bad Kid

"Menace To Society"—it's a bad thing, because everyone looks at you wrong. They think you're a bad kid and they try to lock you up, which is not cool.

I want to live free, not in juvy, doing the things you could only do there. So that's what "Menace Of Society" means to me.

-Oscar

From The Beat: Has anyone ever called you a "Menace To Society"? Whether or not anybody has ever called you that, have you ever thought of yourself as a menace or a threat to anyone? How do you view yourself?

Why Do I Do What I Do?

Thinking to myself,
Why do I put my girl and family through so much pain?
Is it because I try being cool?
Why do I do what I do,
Posted on the block selling rocks to my own people,
Why do I do what I do?
Run in houses and steal things?
I am like Martin Luther King, I still have a dream
Why do I do what I do?
Because I am insane and act a fool.

-D

From The Beat: We love way you set up this poem, asking all the hard questions, and then adding in that you have a dream for something much better with that line about MLK. At the end of the poem you also try to give an answer: "Because I am insane and act a fool?" That means this poem needs a sequel, a "Why Do I Do What I Do Part II", where you explain try to answer what makes you act a fool!

The Taste Of Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving, the smell, the big meals, the tastes of family, friends and loved ones it's like a family reunion and hopefully I get to be there this year. I was last year but probably not this year. Why? 'Cause I'm locked up and so are my two bigger brothers. One's in prison and the three of us would not be a family with the rest cause we're in here.

But they can't keep us forever. Love to my brothers: Happy Thanksgiving

-Lil Vee

From The Beat: Actually, they CAN keep you forever. That's the cold hard truth of the system, right? If you keep committing crimes, eventually, they will catch a serious case. So the next thing we want to say is - ah, you know what comes next.

Your Turn To Start Listening

Always I been begging and listening
Not talking nor disrupting
Nor interrupting but for them I got something
Each day this system is corrupting
Now I'm getting something
I don't mean to start preaching
But it's as easy as changing
Now it's time to stop running,
Again its as easy as staying quiet and listening
Now it's your turn to start listening
'Cause everything's changing

-Secretz

From The Beat: You could be a preacher/cause now you a teacher/your words ring true/the start of something new/but if changing were easy, everyone would do it/no one wants jail once they've been through it/So if we want to change, tell us how/Show us what you mean/the new you starts now.

Q-Vo

Q-vo, Beat. This Dreamer from Hayward, still doin' time. It's easy money up here. This week I get off my restriction, but I got to take a pee test first and sometimes these tests be messin' up.

Other than not going home, things are going okay, considering I'm in an institution. So to all doing time: keep it solid and stay up. Time to rap it up, alrato.

-Dreamer

From The Beat: You need to rethink that phrase, "easy money" — 'cause (1) you make no money locked up in here, and (2) chasing so-called "easy money" played a big role in the choices you made that brought you here, and when you finish counting up all the time you lose to the system — that money is not so easy after all 'cause you pay a price for that so-called easy money. Still, we're glad you're off restriction and feeling better about things.

Questions, Answers

A recipe for success...
is making money in any way possible
I want to know why...
I'm always coming back to jail.
I'm tired of people telling me...
To cut my hair
I'm thankful for... my parents always trying to keep me out of trouble and giving me advice for my future.

-Elisi

From The Beat: We promise we'll never tell you cut your hair! But one thing we've learned is that making money "in any way possible" is what makes people go to jail! Do you really see that as a recipe for success?

RIP Arturo

Rest in peace my cousin. He died in a fight in front of my aunty's house. He was more like a brother to me but that's the way it goes. I miss him and all the rest of the family, but we ride 'till we die.

-A Boy

From The Beat: Sorry to hear about your loss. It's unfortunate how many young people are killing each other. Thank you for yet another reminder to all of you reading to start changing for a better future, including YOU! This is straight bull, your last words "we ride 'till we die." Please, it doesn't have to be this way!

Only God Knows

I don't know what I would do if they gave my brother some hard time?

To tell you the truth I really don't know what I would do. I don't know if I will follow in his footsteps, I don't know if I'm going to start going to school so I can graduate from High School. I don't know if I'm going to get out and start sellin' drugs again and start doing what I used to do.

I don't know if I get out and start listening to my mom. I really don't know. I can't predict the future. Stay up Bra Bra.

-Lil Vee

From The Beat: Of course you can't predict the future... but you know what? You can decide it can't you? What do you think your brother would want you to do, now that he's paying such a terrible price? CHANGE!!!

Thanks To Someone Special

This ya boy Derick. I want to thanks to my mom. Thanks for giving birth to me. Thank you for your support over the years. I just wanted to put the thanks out here. Thanks Mom I love you.

-Derrick

From The Beat: It's always a good thing to thank your parents. We hope she knows how much you appreciate her!

Money

Money is what the world is. You got money, you got the world. That's why when me and my brah Slick get out, we gon' be back on the map. Kash Money is a army of one, but we try to see them big bucks, them Rick Ross dollahs! You feel me?

I got two years left to do. So I'm gonna be back out there! When you see Kash Money in a town here, you keep it lit with me brah, 'cause I'm not stopping till I get a million! Ay, I can't wait to get out. I'm a be wet! Kash money coming soon.

-Kash Money

From The Beat: You'll have a lot more than two years to do if you keep thinking, talking and acting like a foo! You want to pretend that the things that you do are not the reason this happened to you? As they say, "Denial [da Nile] is not just a river in Egypt." Funny that you should mention Slick, 'cause though we really do care about him, his attitude stayed sick and unchanged. We just couldn't get him to see it was himself that he was playing! You need to wake up to reality and take a deeper look at your mentality.

Thankful

Q-Vo Beat, this is Curioso from Hayward doing time. I wanted to say what's up! I wanted to thank my family from my varrio for supporting me while I was on the run. One love to all.

Also I wanted to thank Jessica, for caring and respecting me. I love you Jessica, my firme hyna. This homie gotta go. Alrato.

-Curioso

From The Beat: We are thankful for the fact that you got caught from being on the run. Sounds crazy, right? But we hate to imagine you living a life where you can get picked up at any day, where you can't go to school, where the police could get you at any time. We just want to see you out of the system, out of the cycle of running, and finally free so you can move on with your life

RIP Mikal

This is Derrick coming at you once again. This is to Mikal. We was best friends. You had my back, I had yours. We had known each other since third grade. We were always together. Everywhere I went you went. We were brothers from different mothers. But a brother also in God's way. I love you and miss you bra. I'm gonna stay up for you.

-Derrick

From The Beat: It's a story we hear all too often, but we are sorry to hear it's happening to you too. When is it going to change? When will the violence stop? What thoughts do you have on that?

No Regret

When you have a "no regret" tattoo on you, that means you have to say shhh, no regrets. When you commit a crime you have to say to yourself do you really want to do this? Because if you don't then don't. If you do then have NO REGRET! You can't regret shooting someone or you can't regret stealing a car so in the end you have to say "I HAD NO REGRET DOING WHAT I DID."

-Alex

From The Beat: True regret is less about the past and more about the future. If you put up a blockade around regret, you're just justifying your actions rather than accepting and reflecting on them. Let yourself regret a mistake, and you might not make it again. Live righteous young man, that way you can help others and your rewards will be great.

Eighteen

Hopefully this is the last time I could write for The Beat. Because my time is up, I'm going to see the judge soon, and I'm also about to turn 18.

I think it is time to make a change, like lay low instead of doing the same shhh that got me here.

I'm a vato, I'm not fake like most of them. No names, they're everywhere you look, left to right. OK, so just stay strong and the most important is to be true to your raza. One love.

-Chaka

From The Beat: Best of luck Chaka, and thanks for your loyalty to The Beat all these months. Now, we hope you find a way to be loyal — but not to your affiliation, instead be loyal to the best in you, the part of you that knows right from wrong, the part of you that wants a good life for you and your family. We hope to hear from you!

Rip Emmitt Moore Jr.

Emmit, what happened? You left us. That car was a bitch. You dropped bars in it. Emmit dammit I miss you cousin, but you're still here in my heart. How it's like up there? Tell me in my sleep Emmit, how it is!

-Lil' Dirty

From The Beat: It's always hard to lose a person you got love for. Keep your head up and live everyday for him.

What I'm Tired of People Telling Me

i'm tired of people telling me to go to my room
 i'm tired of staff telling me when i can eat and us the bathroom
 i'm tired of people saying if i don't change my life
 that i will live the rest of my life behind bars or die
 because it's my choices and my life they're talking about
 so let me live my own life and make my own choices
 i'm tired of people telling me that i am a thug
 just because i'm trying a different way of getting dough
 i'm tired of people telling me things about myself like they knew me
 for my whole life when they just met me not too long ago

- Dame

From The Beat: If you are talking about staff, then yes you are right that they tell you what to do. That is their job, to tell you what to do. If you don't like it, stay out! Keep writing, 'cause the truth is in your words, just look. [The foregoing was written by a Beat teen typist who's been in the system, and though it's not part of his job description, we decided to let it stand, as is. However we'd like to add:] Your choices are what brought you to a juvenile hall maximum security unit. How much more evidence do you need in order to see that they're not working for you? Nobody can make you change what you think, but do you really think this life style is still working for you? Don't you see that at the root of where you are, which has everyone else making choices for you, are th choices you make when you're free?

Why

I want to know why the world is turning like this and why people rob and kill. Also what made us do this but i think that's the way we got raised.

-Carlos

From The Beat: We were all raised differently, and there's no denying that our experiences growing up form us as adults too, but there are some people who choose to take a different path than the one that's been shown to them. We wish we knew why people rob and kill, because maybe then we could stop it.

Tired

I'm tired of people telling me what to do and talking shhh about me and i want to know why people talking shhh about my friends and family.

-Danny

From The Beat: It's always tiring to listen to people's negativity. Usually the best thing to do in that situation is to try to respond with positive words—it'll make people stop and think.

I Want a Girl

i wanna girl who wants to make some change
 parked outside, i'll be flippin' a range'
 up on two-two's or maybe on fo's
 if you need that thing, i got four-four
 i wanna girl that needs a playa like me
 i ain't promising things, i ain't say i won't
 cheat
 but i know you need me
 i'll feed ya, i'll be ya teacha
 take you to church to see the preacha
 i'll reach ya when i get out
 i wanna girl that ain't scared to give pearl
 a wifey who will buy me the world

-Andrew

From The Beat: Sounds like you ain't looking for the right girl. i think you need to work on yourself and figure out what you really want. You deserve a good girl who hasn't been exposed to the "game" as you guys like to call it. . [The foregoing was written by a Beat teen typist who's been in the system, and though it's not part of his job description, we decided to let it stand, as is. However, we'd add:] We recommend that every girl who reads your piece, cut it out and save it, just to remind themselves of who they're not trying to meet — 'cause the world you offer them is at best bleak, and you have nothing whatsoever that they need.

Tired of Being Told

I'm tired of people telling me that I can't do good because I'm always getting in trouble and because i don't pay attention to my family when they tell me that i'm doing something that i don't have to be doing.

Second of all i'm tired of people telling me that i'm never going to change the way i am. i know if i try my very best to do good, i know i could be someone really important in life.

-Pony

From The Beat: Use those who discourage you as a source of personal motivation. Prove them wrong! You'll be surprised to learn that some of those who talked like that are delighted to be proven mistaken about you and your future, even if some are not.

Code Of Honor

What it do! This is Lil' Troublesum from Hayward coming at y'all from this place. It's been a while since i've last wrote for The Beat, but trust me, i have my reasons.

A recipe for success: Well, in order to ever succeed in anything, regardless what it is — dope game, relationships, business transactions, etc. — you gotta trust whomever your dealing with. Once that's installed in a partnership, loyalty plays its role.

These are the two main keys to succeeding in life. Everything else is a given — money, power, and respect! One love.

-Lil' Juanito

From The Beat: You know that we don't believe it doesn't matter what game [enterprise, endeavor] your words apply to. It seems like an impassable chasm between us and you, 'cause we believe loyalty to your gang above all else means any chance of a normal life for you is through. No regular job, no family with kids, no loving wife — just banging in prison. We're not saying you won't beat your case and get another chance at freedom, but we're saying that its privileges and joys you won't be keeping if you make no effort to expand your way of seeing.

I'm Tired of People Telling Me

that i am not fit for the outside world
 you know the outs
 it seems like every time i get locked up
 someone in my family die
 rest in peace: wayne manguam
 we from the same turf
 but its all good
 he went to meet his dad

-Lil' Maine

From The Beat: If someone dies every time you get locked up, i'd try not to get locked up anymore. Seems like life is on pause for you at the moment. Utilize it to better yourself, then get out and handle business. [The foregoing was written by a Beat teen typist who's been in the system, and though it's not part of his job description, we decided to let it stand, as is. However, we'd add:] If by family, you mean the homies from your block that you love like family, then you need to change your life not just to save your life and freedom but to show them there's a better way than dying in a game that always stays the same — scandalous, murderous, treacherous and insane.

I'm Tired Of People Telling Me

I'm tired of people telling me that everything is going to be all right when they don't even know what is going to happen — and then it goes all the way bad!

When that person hears what happened, they say that it's all going to be good. But at the same time, you just got to do what you got to do. And at the same time, you really do have to believe it's going to be all good.

-Choyce

From The Beat: You can't give in to despair. Also, all the worrying in the world won't change the outcome, but it makes today harder to bear. Some say, prepare for the best, but expect the worst. Others pray: God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

Untitled

What's up, Beat and Beat readers! This is homeboy Lil' Booger from Hayward comin' at y'all from this max unit once again. Well, man, this will be my second Thanksgiving away from my family!

Last year I spent the Thanksgiving holiday at ROP, and this year I'll be here in the Hall behind these Alaco walls. It's all good though, 'cause at least i'll get to be wit' my hood brother that's also in max wit me. So i ain't tripping; at least i'll be wit one of my loved ones.

Hopefully i'll be home next time Thanksgiving comes around, but if not, then freak it — 'cause i already know when i hit them notorious Hayward streets, i'm acting a foo', straight up!

But to all them homeboys and homegirls doing time, stay up and stay solid. Loyalty above all lost. Always remember that, and you'll be forever loved.

-Lil' Booger

From The Beat: Two Thanksgivings in a row spent incarcerated and your bottom line is "freak it — 'cause i already know ... i'm acting a foo'" And that's your definition of keeping it solid? It's like volunteering to be a victim! It's like group psychosis. So when you're on the yard, packing a shank, looking over your shoulder, out on a mission to kill — that's all to guarantee "you'll be forever loved"? Man, ask the children who grow up without a father if they loved never seeing him come home from work to have dinner with them, maybe bringing them a treat but for sure bringing them loving hugs — but you'd rather see those kids grow up to commit the same monstrous sins against familial love! We hope you have a vision in the night that wakes you from this nightmare you're choosing to live.

Getting Out

What's up Beat, how's life been treating you? This is Payne from Hayward, California. Today i'm going to write about when i'm going to get out of Juvenile Hall.

I can still remember when i first came in, when i was like twelve years old, and i said that i'm never coming back. And i remember praying everyday, telling God that i won't commit another crime. Now this is about my ninth time in here — and i'm still saying that i'm not coming back.

But now my wish is going to come true, because i'm about to be eighteen in December, and after my birthday, sometime January, i'm going to get released, and straighten up my life so i can become a successful member of society (out in society).

-Payne

From The Beat: You are getting a fresh start at eighteen, but it's still on you to stay free. Pray as if it all depends on God, but act as if it all depends on you. Or, to put it another way, don't just give God your heart but also your head, hands and feet. Don't just talk the talk, walk the walk.

"I Don't Want To Hear It"

i'm tired of people telling me i'm gon'
end up in the phase in this jail mess
i'm tired of people telling me not to do something
and they out there doing the same thing
i'm tired of people telling me who i should
mess wit' and who i shouldn't mess wit'
i'm tired of people that's not on some real
always wantin' to be like the next ninja
i'm tired of people telling me that i'm not gon' make it
and that i can't get what i want in life
i don't think y'all hearin' me when i say i'm tired of ninjas
hatin' on me 'cause i do what i do and makin' it on top
i'm tired of all these girls tryin' to get pregnant by me
for my genes and what i got and telling me they love me
like i said i don't think y'all heard me when i said
i'm tired of people tellin' me anything that's not gon' help me

-Free Man

From The Beat: You know this is not a "temporary setback" but a warning that far from making it to the top, your digging a deeper hole in which to drop each time you get out and come back. If you don't want to hear these tired words from friends and foes, you need to take more responsibility for what you ought to know by now — the game in the street leads to inevitable defeat. We know you don't want to hear it, but only truth will free your spirit.

Back Here For Bull

I came back to juveve for some bull. I went to a party wit' my girl on Friday night and I was drinkin'. Then I went to sleep upstairs in my girl's patna' bed wit' my girl.

Then all of a sudden, I heard a couple of people runnin' 'cause the police had came and they started to searchin' the halls. They found a pistol. And since I'm on probation, they took my ash to juvenile hall.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: It doesn't sound fair. However, even though everyone else does it too, it's still not a good idea to hit parties with drink, drugs, etc., when you're still on probation. Better to keep it simple with you and your girl at least till your free of restrictions.

i'm tired of people telling
me that i'm not gon' make it
and that i can't get what i
want in life

Thanksgiving/ Birthday

What's up! It's me again in this joint for the second Thanksgivin'/birthday. I feel hellu bad and sad, 'cause I got to be here for my birthday. I had a lot of stuff to do and a lot of friends to be with and family, but there's nothing I can do but try to not come for my next year's birthday, or at all.

-Boricua

From The Beat: What do you mean when you write "try"? You try to be slicker or ride in the cuts? If you really want to stay out, you need to back off from the banging and ... well, really only you can say. So tell us, what do you mean by "try"?

Keep Y'all Heads Up

This is Lil' Freddy from Oakland, just sayin' — keep y'all heads up, and when you get out, don't come back.

-Lil' Freddy

From The Beat: Once you get out, what's your own plan to stay a free man?

Thanksgiving

I wanna thank God for being by my side, even though I mess up all the time or when I do the wrong thing.

-Savage

From The Beat: God's always there to hold your hand and gently lead you back to doing the right thing so you can feel happy joyous and free — if only you willingly follow God's lead.

Not Me

I want to know why people try to help me out to do good and be someone in life. I feel like they are trying to change me into someone that is not me, but then I know that they're doing it for my good.

-Pony

From The Beat: You're not the same person today that you were when you were six. Why get stuck now? Also when can change what you do and how you think, and still be you — new and improved!

What's Up

What's up, Beat! How's life been treating you? This is Payne from Hayward. Today I'm going to be writing about the juvenile hall system, and maybe something else ... never mind! The Beat Within is over now and I got to give my pencil to the staff and go back to the four walls of my room. Peace, peace!

-Payne

From The Beat: It turns out you did write a little something about the system, two things: (1) you seem to like having a writing program (that among other things, gets you out of your room), and (2) you spend a lot of time looking at those same four walls (and we figure everyone says this because a door with no knob on the inside makes your room feel like a four-walled box).

RIP Emmitt

This my funny ninja. He stayed havin' me laughin' in the class when it was boring. My ninja stayed messin' with somebody, but it be funny! Now my ninja gone! And he will be forever missed — gone but never forgotten.

-Lil' Freddy

From The Beat: You didn't tell us what took his life. We hope he didn't trade his life for a cheap laugh, 'cause cappin' on someone is not worth all that. In fact, all this negativity of hatin' on the next man, plays a larger role than you might understand, in the shootings and murders across Oakland and the East Bay. So get deeper into what's real than your padna made you laugh in class and now his life on earth is a done deal.

Thanks Mom

i am thankful for
having my mom
in my life
i love my mom

-Chris

From The Beat: And she loves you, too. Now show her what you can do.

I Want To Know Why....

i want to know why — why do people hate
why — oh they can't answer because when the
tables turn
it's time to turn down all light switches

-Mill

From The Beat: This little poem seems to confirm that everyone in the Hall takes his turn at hating on haters ... which also means, everyone hates.

Giving Thanks to My Mom

This Thanksgiving I want to thank my mother. A lot of people are probably going to write about their moms, but I really do thank my mom for all that she has done for me — like raise me and cook for me — and most of all, I want to thank her for taking care of my daughter, Brianna, a.k.a. lil' Eponie.

-Peaches

From The Beat: You kept it short and sweet, but we can feel the heat of your love, for both your mother and your daughter. Now get your mind set to get back home and do what you ought to.

I'm Tired of People Telling Me

i'm tired of people telling me
that i can't make it outside of jail
they say that i keep myself alive
by committing crimes
i'm tired of them saying
i'm a menace to society
i'm tired of the weakass DA's
trying to throw the book at me every time
i come here
i'm tired of people saying i'm a failure.

-Young Weezy

From The Beat: Maybe they don't know how hard it can be to keep yourself alive on the outside without committing crimes. You don't need a job resume to sell cream or purple, and you don't have to be all that responsible — just pay for what you get and keep the rest. Maybe it's easier to stay away from that life (we haven't even mentioned house licks, car jacks or robberies), if you've never done it. Now here's the deal, you've got to change your life style on the outs on the real! You're old enough now to hustle up some kind of legal job. The only way you'll get free of the system is to break free from the "mob" — even if you believe selling drugs doesn't make you a menace, by now you should see it makes you a menace to your own desire to stay free.

But Why Do I

i want to know why
must it be like this all of the time
why i always try to do right
but always end up doing wrong
why good things never last long
and bad things are always around the corner
why i got to live mi vida loca
because i choose to!

-Good intentions

From The Beat: In recovering from addiction, addicts come to see that in many cases their addiction made the choices for them when they thought they were the one choosing. You can be addicted to la vida loca, or to certain aspects of it, and that addiction take over your mind and heart unless you defeat it. How do you do that? You have to change your playgrounds, playmates and playthings. Separate yourself from la vida loca to find out what you really want.

I'm Tired

what i'm tired of
is that i hate when people
tell me how to live my life
me i'm going to live life to the fullest
like i said before
you get it how you live it
so don't tell me how to live
and what else i hate
when i hear someone say the same thing
i already heard
so quit telling me nothin'
and let me live my life

-Lil' Keith

From The Beat: If you call spinning your wheels here in lock up, living your life, then go right ahead and keep doing what you've been doing. When people tell you the truth once, get angry if they tell you again, and that way you're sure to block out any chance of learning how to stay on the outs, alive and free.

Tired Of People ...

i'm tired of people telling me i'm different
i'm tired of people telling me this is a game
i'm tired of people giving me a label
i'm tired of people telling giving me meds and assuming
i'm tired of people telling me when to use the bathroom
i'm tired of people giving twenty min' to eat
why oh why do i get treated like a criminal
i make mistakes just like police or hall staff
i'm jermaine who is sixteen years old
and know where i came from
and know where i'm going

-Jermaine

From The Beat: Are you saying that it's not crimes that keep bringing you back but what some might call petty violations of probation? Is that what you mean by mistakes? In any case, it's always good to remember where you came from, but tell us — exactly where do you see yourself going, and how do you plan to get there?

"I Feel Good"

I'm tired of the morning staff waking us up, playing that same-ass ol' James Brown CD! The same-ass song, for like a month!

-Lil' Joe

From The Beat: Seems like whatever wakes you up soon becomes a hated sound, but really — you hating on James Brown?

Young Prince

I'm a young prince Ronnizie with the twist.
I'm a young stunna
stunnin' like my mommy never had a daddy
stuck in the system this shhh is crappy.
I'm yung stunna boy Ronnizie
popping bottles like it's nothing,
step up
show what you all about,
mash wit me I'm bring those thangs out.

-Ronnell

From The Beat: It's a nice rhyme, really, but we wonder what it is you're trying to say. You say you're "stuck in the system," but the rest of the piece doesn't make it seem like you're doing too much to get yourself out of that situation. Let us know if we're wrong.

I Want To Know

I want to know why they have music
I want to know why we have television
I want to know why people have to have gang bangers
I want to know why they invented cigarettes.

-Whyohwhy

From The Beat: All good questions. If we didn't have music we would have nothing to sing along to, nothing to dance to. Television, gangs and cigarettes are all aspects of society that we could probably do without—but what do we do now that they exist?

I Want To Know Why

i want to know why do i make the wrong decision
why do i smoke weed and why do i post on the block
sometimes i wonder why do i get out and do same thing
why do i get out and commit the same crime
and another thing i want to know is why i lie to myself
for example when i'm in jail i will say
that when i get out i'm going to go to school and do good
and what i do is hit for sales up and get caught
so i wonder why and i ask myself why

-Lil' Keith

From The Beat: It sounds like you're addicted to the street, and when you're back out on the street, your addiction to sales (and fast money) seizes control of your will (your heart and your mind), and all your good intentions are left behind. They say an addict won't stop till he hits bottom. What would that be for you? How low do you have to go before you finally find the will power to stop? It's like you're on an elevator going down, and you can get off on any floor. But it's up to you, recop or stop. (Oh, and addicts always lie to themselves, tell themselves whatever they need to hear to put themselves back in a position to feed their habits. Again, it sounds like you.)

Will You?

If I die, will you tear?
If I yell will you hear?
If I was smoke could i reach heaven?
or will I die before 2011
Will you pour out some drank for me
Or will you respect me on the G?

-Wheazie wop

From The Beat: We will respect you if you pass, but we'd much rather you stay alive. What steps are you taking to make sure you live old instead of dying young?

Recipe For Success

My recipe for success is staying out of here.

-Savage

From The Beat: So, what's your recipe for staying out of here?

i'm tired of people telling me
when to use the bathroom
i'm tired of people giving
twenty min' to eat

Mad Because I'm Back

Man, I am mad because i'm back! The reason I am back is because when I was on the run I had done some stupid stuff, and when I turned myself in, I got out a week later.

Then three days later, I was at school when a cop came to get me at school. They took me to the Hall and, anyways, if I get to go home — I plan to do good.

-Lil' Porkey

From The Beat: So we're a little confused as to why they came to get you at school. Isn't that where you were supposed to be? Or did something happen you skip over in this piece, which is why you finally realize you need to do good on the outs to stay out! Don't let your anger undermine your newfound common sense.

Scraper Wit' No Brakes

i live my life like a scraper wit' no brakes
i don't slow down
too solid to smile so i stay wit' a frown
i know i get down too low for myself
i'm bad for my own health
i'm on a mission to get rich
but one thing i know
you can't say i'm a snitch
but i'm bout to put some brakes on my scraper
so i could slow down
'cause i'm on my way to the pen
or under the ground

-Lil' Eli

From The Beat: Yes, you need to slow down and stop, next time you're on the outs thinking to recop. 'Cause halfway measures won't keep you alive and free. You need to get out that game and live legitimately. If a bullet goes halfway through your head, you'll still be dead. If you serve half of a life sentence, you'll still feel plenty of remorse and repentance. So it's better to repent now and start turning your life around!

Tired Of People Telling Me ...

i'm tired of people saying
it's too late for me
that's the main reason why
i'm praying i get out
on e m or home supe'
just so i can make it happen
mainly for myself
and most of all for my nephew and fam'
and for all my young patnas

-Junnie

From The Beat: Just what do you want to make happen? We hope it is to solidify your freedom after your release by staying away from the street. Get a high school degree and a j-o-b, so you can stay free. Of course, someone will always hate, but just say late.

Wanna Know

I wanna know why I got caught for what I did. When I got caught I was mad at the police for getting me because I didn't want to go to da hall.

-Joseph

From The Beat: You probably got caught because eventually, if you're living a life of crime, most people do. We know that no one wants to go to the hall, but avoiding this place means staying away from things that will get you into trouble.

Why

This is Derrick coming again
I feel I need to ask why?
Why do we live in a society of killing?
Why do we come to juvenile hall?
Why do we do the gang thing?
Why can't we be positive?
Why do we choose not to learn?
Why can't we all just get along?
Why? Why? Why?

-Derrick

From The Beat: Are these question to yourself and everyone else? Can you answer some of them for us? We need answers from experts like you.

I Want To Know Why?

I want to know why crimes are crimes and why
when you commit them
you get the sentence you get.
Why are there dirty cops who frame innocent kids
whose only crime was being at the wrong place at
the wrong time?
So when you do the crimes you wish that you
wouldn't have done it.
So when you commit a crime know what your doing
before you do it.

-Alex

From The Beat: The answer to your questions is just to stay away from all the hot spots, that way you won't have to ask yourself why anymore. Keep writing, because we can see you've discovered the power of a pencil.

Thanksgiving

What's up, Beat! How's life been treating you? This is Payne from Hayward, California, writing you from Alameda County Juvenile Hall.

Today I'm going to be writing about Thanksgiving. I can't remember my last Thanksgiving with my family, since this is about to be the third Thanksgiving in a row I had in Juvenile Hall! But the person I would want to thank is my mom — for all the support she gives me and all the things she does for me.

-Payne

From The Beat: We wish she could have seen this piece in print before Thanksgiving — but she probably knows how you feel anyway. Why not promise yourself to stay out of trouble in the street and/or trouble with the system, so you can be with her next year.

My Ghetto Story

A real ninja like me came straight from nothing. If you was to take a tour in ma kitchen this is what you would see :
Peanut butter — no jelly;
Cereal — no milk;
Ham — no burger;
Chips — no dip;
Garbage — no bags;
A-1 sauce — no steak;
Oranges — no juice;
Salt — no pepper;
Monopoly — no dice.

And the one that always makes me mad is hot air with no condition...
Now ain't that funny? Ain't that something?

-Fg Baby B4

From The Beat: We'd like you to conduct the same kind of survey, but this time not of your kitchen but of your self... When you look inside, what do you see that needs completing? What is missing that you can add to in order to make yourself

I'm More Than Nothing

I'm tired of people telling me hat I'm nothing and always going to be nothing. When I get out this time, I'm going to show everybody that they wrong, and I can do it and be a role model. I'm just going to go and be myself, go to school, and stop messin' with all them bad kids by my house.

I'm tired of people telling me that I can't do. I been in the halls two times. This my third, and this time I learned what I have to do. What I have to do is just be myself and get my education, what all kids should do. I have a baby mama to go to, and I'm not going to hurt her no more and have her fine ass stressing over me. I'ma be a good baby daddy to her, and treat her with respect like most boys should do to all they girlfriends.

My grandma be telling me stuff and I don't listen sometimes, but now when I get out I'm always going to listen and get my life right!

-Lil' MIMO B4

From The Beat: We hope that all the negative things people say about you motivates you to make the changes you know you have to make to avoid coming here a fourth time! Can you tell us why it took you three times of giving up your freedom in this place to realize that you don't want to be here again? What kinds of things does your grandma tell you which you plan to listen to this time?

Moon And Sun

Love is something that you get when you meet the right person. Man, love to me is like a moon and a sun.

-Connie B5

From The Beat: Well, the earth revolves around the sun but the moon revolves around the earth. So does your love revolve around you, or do you revolve around her? Are you the moon or the sun?

Stuck In The Hall And In My Mind

Then and now
Long nights, short days,
I was getting money, I was getting paid,
It was all good when I was in the 'hood,
But now I'm in the halls, stuck behind walls,
Every day it was something new, high and that's true.
But now I'm stuck in the room with nothing to do.
I was doing my thing, female screaming my name,
but now I'm locked up and shhh ain't the same
Every day seeing dope flends, every day fresh Girbaud jeans,
But now I'm in the room waiting to be seen,
I was stacking my chips, waiting to get rich,
But now I'm so gone thinking about that and this
I'm doing all of this time, and I'm waiting to get out,
ready to know any ninja out who open up they mouth.

-Fg Baby

From The Beat: We see nothing in this piece that tells us you are thinking of anything other than the life that got you here to begin with! You WERE stacking your chips; females WERE screaming your name; you WERE getting high. And now where are you? We can tell you that if you don't use this time out you've been forced to take, then you'll just be piling wasted time on wasted time, and you can look forward to more of the same (or worse). Without making some changes (that require you to think about what you have been doing and what you want to be doing), you will continue to be stacking chips, but they won't be going into your pockets, but the pockets of those who operate the system. And, as far as female's screaming your name... in your dreams! If this is the world you want, keep doing what you do. If you want something different, do something different!

HIV: Part 2

Ever since I announced my "condition" (as I call it), everybody is telling me what I should do to survive. I am so tired of people telling me what to do wit' my life. They can't feel my strain of success for my struggle to live. They don't know what I put up with every day. It's like a constant drug I can't get rid of. Every time I breathe or feel an affection for somebody, I can't allow myself to succeed with my plans. I feel "weak" in a sense but what can I do? I struggle every day with myself knowing I'm 'bout to die!

-Relly Boe B4

From The Beat: You don't know you're about to die, Relly Boe! We think the most important element for your good health is your own state of mind and how you approach your illness. You are not 'bout to die! You are 'bout to live! Yes, there is life after HIV. We know far too many people who are living their lives with this condition. Yes, it requires extra care. Yes, you have to take meds. Yes, you have to be honest with your partners and protect them and yourself. But having said all that, you are still in charge of your own life and how you live it. Get your mind out of that sense that it's all over for you. It isn't. You will be alive for a very, very long time. The question you should be asking yourself is not whether you will live or not, but how you will live. That is entirely in your hands.

A Question

So, I have a question for you today... How many times have you been to the halls? How many times you said, "I ain't coming back?" Or how many times you lied to yourself? Just be honest and keep it real with yourself and honestly ask if your ready to change. Are you ready to change your nouns? So with that being said, keep it KI and stay off that tuna.

-Reese-C-Cup B4

From The Beat: What are your answers to these excellent questions, JR?

Some Life Is More "Precious" Than Other's

Just want to know why people say life is precious, and some people say it's atrocious. Most people saying that are from the 'hood or going through it. I was just talking to ma attorney, and she said that life is precious. I said to myself, "It's easy for her to say when you get brought into this world wealthy with nothing to worry about. Then I guess life would be good.

-Perciko B4

From The Beat: Your prejudices are showing... You really have no idea how your attorney came up or what she had to overcome to get where she is. No one grows up with "nothing to worry about," and many people who started with nothing have gone on to become great doctors, lawyers, actors, teachers, businesspeople, politicians, artists, etc. We're not saying that it's equally easy for everyone because we know that isn't true. But we also know that the biggest predictor of success is your own commitment and determination to achieve it, no matter how hard! If the life you're living now is not precious, that should be enough incentive to change it.

Thank You Mom

I would like to thank my mom for caring for me and for everything I do, even if it's bad or good. She took care of me when I was sick ad she was there for me when I needed her. She's the best mom. And she's the nicest mom too!

I would like to thank her for everything she's done for me and am very thankful for visiting me in juvenile. She's the only one who visited me and I love her for that. Without my mom I wouldn't be here and even through hard times we went through, she'll always be there for me, and I love her for that.

Thank you Mom.

-Andrew B4

From the Beat: It's always nice to recognize all that your mom has done for you, all the sacrifices she's made for you, and express your thanks. But these words don't mean a lot if they're not backed up with action. In other words, if you really want to express your love, show her, don't tell her! You know what she wants most from you, but you haven't been able to give her that yet — and we're talking about giving her yourself to be there with her at home, giving her the support and love you know she wants from you. Can you put that kind of action behind your words? That would be the best thank you of all!

Thanksgiving

Yeah, it doesn't look like this Thanksgiving I will be home. I'm gonna be here with a lot of shwaka heads, but it's all right 'cause they ain't going nowhere and neither am I. But it's cool. We will be out someday. But I still wanna get out hella bad to get my five dollars this homie owes me, but I probably won't get it until a year and a half 'cause I'm going to Glen Mills. All right then, later fool, see you next time

-Chicano B4

From The Beat: We took most of what you wrote out, because you just kept talking about other people who are locked up with you and disrespecting them. We're not interested in your critique of your fellow prisoners... We're interested in your critique of yourself, and what you need to do to keep yourself free.

Boo Boo Kitty Freak

Hi Boo Boo Kitty. What you chasin' that mouse for?

It's gone bite you on your nose.
Run Boo Boo Kitty run.
It ran it the hole.

Hey Boo Boo Kitty, why you chasin' that ball?
Get away from the stairs before you fall.
Your momma comin' you better run
Before you get shot with that pellet gun.

-LaRonda GU

From The Beat: If you are the Boo Boo Kitty in this poem, then you'd better understand exactly why your momma is coming — to warn you that the game you're playing is rigged against you, so you'd better get out of it!

she'll Be Here

I want to thank my mom because she always there for me and she care about me. I don't know how long I'm gonna be here, but I know that even if I stay for a long time, she's going to be here for me and she doesn't care what I did.

-Victor B4

From The Beat: You're very lucky to have a mother like this who cares about her son and his future. But what are you doing to show her that you care about her and her future? If you keep doing the things that take you from her, then you will keep breaking her heart. You owe her more than these nice words. When all you can come up with to say thank you to your mother is two sentences in an hour's workshop, we don't think you're giving her the respect she obviously has earned.

Explain This Mystery

I want to know why I'm so smart, so mature, but do the things I do. What they are, not good believe me, you need no explanation. Why am I so beautiful inside, concealed no, but fo' sho on the outside, but treat myself the way that I do?

I see right through you... yes you, and whoever speak. All I need us one second. So intelligent, wise, and respectful, as if when you talk real I look into your eyes. I hold much love for who really cares, I just want to know why?

-Kendrick GU

From The Beat: It is human nature to make mistakes (only God is perfect). But at the end, we have to choose the path we want to walk, even if that choice is easier for some than for others. So the answer to your question can only come from you... Why do you do what you do, even when you know you should be doing something else? We all do things for a reason, so what is your reason for the things you do that get you into trouble? As a smart and mature young lady, these are questions you not only want to ask yourself, you also want to attempt some answers. Do you really care about you? If so, then use that love you have for yourself to change your choices.

Thanksgiving

This Thanksgiving I especially wanna thank my mom for always being here even though I've done wrong. I never knew what it was like to have to spend the holidays away. But now I realize, and this is why I say I wanna give her thanks.

She would always give me lectures and tell me things, but I guess I never took them in. I just guess I had to learn on my own, but now I see. I just wanna thank her for what she'd try to tell me. So thank you mom.

-Smiley G GU

From The Beat: This is a very sweet piece and we hope you share it with your mother. She will be so happy to hear what you have to say. (You might even want to keep this piece in a special place so that when your own time comes to try to talk to your own children... when they won't listen to you, you can show them this piece!)

Me And VC

Roses are dead,
Violets is too,
I'm still in love
But with VC

When I walked down Civic Center
You came up to me looking fly
And I was always shy

I wasn't afraid to have a relationship with you
But every time I seen you, you was always with a female
So I thought you was messin' with them... Is that true?
When you walked behind me and I asked you to move
You looked at me and said, "You don't know what you missin'"
Now that I'm locked up it gives me a lot of time to think
You stay on my mind, at night I can't sleep
I need a little chocolate ninja in my life
Because you that hardcore ninja, you make me weak
I feel stupid because I'm in juvenile
And now I want to admit, at first I was looking at you
Like you looking for a down-ass female to be in your life
Now when I sleep, I dream of you
Ain't that some shhh
Ninjas was like you got shot
And all of a sudden my tears started to drop
They threatening me with eight years, six months
But it's cool 'cause when I get out
I'm going to Texas and re-up with a few Gs
Now all I dream about is me and VC

-Rosevette GU

From The Beat: We're not sure from this piece whether VC was shot to death or injured or what, but we can see clearly that as long as your focus is on getting a "chocolate ninja" in your life, then you are not focusing on getting your life together in a way that will avoid this kind of result. Unless you want this to be your fate (or worse), then we strong urge you to start thinking about a plan for your future that takes you to school and not to the streets, that looks at yourself as the only person who really cares about your future, and not to some OGs who will never care more about you than they do about themselves.

Happy Birthday

Happy Birthday to y'all! Well, I'm saying happy birthday to my big bra and sis. They're twins and their birthday's coming up. They're about to be the big twenty-four and I'm not going to be there to say anything.

I'ma lil' sis' 'bout to be a teen, so I'm saying happy birthday because I'm not going to be there and I hope the best for their birthday.

-Young Weezy GU

From The Beat: And we wish them a happy birthday too! And we add a wish for you — that you will be able to give them the present they want next year on their 25th... and that is you at home where you belong!

I Want To Know Why

I want to know why I keep playing with my life not doing what I need to be doing. I want to know why I have so much heat an' pain, for not listening to my family? Is that why sometimes I think I want to be better than my family, better than what they made me, because the past ain't shhh.

-Shelly GU

From The Beat: In order to build a better future, you have to understand the past. It's not good enough just to say it was shhh, and never look at it again. If you can examine your own life (which is difficult for all of us to do), and connect the dots of your experiences that lead you here, then you will be able to see the links you have to break, the patterns you have to change, the relationships you have to build, and the plan you have to put in place to succeed. It's all within you to accomplish.

I'm Tired...

I'm tired of people telling me I'm a messed up, and I ain't gone be shhh in life. I'm tired of disappointing my fam. I'm tired of people telling me I'ma end up like my pops, a screw-up always on the streets. I'm tired of people asking me when I'ma get my shhh together. All I'm really saying in my head is it ain't their life and to mind they business

-Lil' Nicoya GU

From The Beat: Well, Lil' Nicoya, prove them wrong then. The reality is this: you keep putting yourself in positions that give others not only the opportunity, but also the requirement that they (cops, POs, judges, counselors, etc.) comment on your life. You can wish all you want for that to stop, but as long as you keep doing what you're doing, it won't change. So how tired of these things are you? When you are tired enough of hearing these comments and questions — and when you are tired enough of doing the things that produce these comments and questions — that's when the comments will end.

A Recipe For Success

Go to school
Be on time
Do the homework
Get good grades
Don't get in trouble
Graduate high school
Graduate college
Get a good job
Save some money
Enjoy life
Have some fun

-Steven B1

From The Beat: So, if you already know the "secret" of success (and you obviously do), why didn't you follow it? Have you decided to make some specific changes in your life from what you've learned from this experience? Can you share some of those decisions with The Beat?

Life After You Left

Since you left, things been hard. There's no one to run to or talk to now when I'm goin' through problems. Damn, you gone baby, but you know your name remains in my heart. It just hurts to know you ain't around but up there looking over me.

I think every day 'bout what you had told me, "I'll always be around." But since you left, I know that you are always around even though I can't hear ya voice. I just wanted to say as long as I live you'll remain in my heart just like your name will remain on my arm. Love you baby.

-Anna GU

From The Beat: It is always hard to lose those we love at any age, but especially at such a young age! You're right that he will remain alive in your heart and mind as long as you live, so we hope you look carefully at the way you're living your own life so that you can make it as long and as full as possible. You should live to make both him and you proud of yourself, and not waste your life on the streets or behind bars.

Tired Of The Obstacles

What's up? I'm a graffiti artist in the notorious city of San Francisco. Right now I'm feeling kind of down, and I'm going to tell you why. Well, first of all, I'm here because I ran away from the Walden House. The reason why I ran away from the Walden House was because I acted on impulse after I had little chat with staff member. She told me how there is no point in going back to my normal life because I'm just going to get caught up in the same shhh. After this me and a friend decided to leave because I was a little pissed off. And my friend was going to leave anyways.

The reason why these words touched me is because I was really trying to do good and go back home with my family.

So anyways, right now I'm really tired. I'm really tired of going through all these obstacles just to go back home, with my newborn baby brother. I'm feeling real down right now because I haven't painted in over three and a half months. I also haven't touched a female in over three and a half months. So right now I'm really hopeful that the next program I go to — either a group home or the ranch — can help me get back home because I'm really tired of this shhh.

Thank you for listening and long live the resistance.

-AJ B5

From The Beat: Here's the deal, AJ. Knowing that you acted on impulse against your own interests is the beginning of change. But obviously, knowledge is not enough. It wasn't enough to keep you from acting on that impulse. There must be more than knowledge of right and wrong; there must be commitment to stick to the course you've set for yourself, even when it gets frustrating, even when you get pissed off! The only way to eliminate the obstacles that are holding you back is to face them, one by one, and overcome them. If your own impulsive impatience is keeping you down, then you need to mature to the level where you can endure things that don't make you happy in the near term in order to secure things that do make you happy in the long term.

Ingredients For Success

The ingredients I need are mo' money, mo' hits songs, mo CDs to sell mo' fans. And if you mix all of these ingredients you going to get mo' notice and have a platinum CD. Yo' shhh going to be number one world-wide you feel me?

-Yung B B5

From The Beat: It seems to us that you need some more basic ingredients than the ones you've named — like a way to get out of jail and a way to stay out of jail. You can have all the hit-song success in the world, but that won't keep you out of here. We're glad you're so dedicated to your music, but first you should be dedicated to your freedom!

Looking For Answers

I want to know why they spend a lot of money on making new juvenile halls and jails. They can't build new schools or community centers or feed the poor, but they got money to build jails and new Fed building. That's bullshhh. I want an answer

-Yung B B5

From The Beat: Okay, Yung B, you've asked a very important question here which reveals the priorities of our society (jails over schools). But let's ask you a question in reverse: When you were on the outs, did you go to school every day? Did you take advantage of the free education that was being offered? If not, then how can you blame the system for not building more schools? If you did attend school regularly, what are you doing in here?

Trap Star

Man, Beat, I'm one of the realest ninjas in it

Y'all already know
I won "Trapper of the Year"
Four times in a row
'Cause they like it
Slide through the 'hood
Just ta check ma dough
Fresh trap star gear
From head ta toe
From toe ta head
The kicks match the hat
Black t-shirt, yeah
It match the chain
Bang ma turf
And Lil' Purp is the name
'Cause I'm a trap star
Keep Bonnie on tha street
An' cop goose by the bar
'Cause they like it
They like it

-Lil' Purp B1

From The Beat: Trap Star Crap Star/Just look at where you are/Tight-ass kicks and Bonnie Parker?/Look again — you're shod by Bob Barker/You may have girls out on the street/But in here it's all Clydes and dirty feet/You want to be a star, you want to be the Sun/And maybe you are — but it's all in B1/Drink all you want and carry that strap/We'll see you again 'cause you'll surely be back!

I'm Tired Of People Telling Me...

I'm tired of people telling me when to wake up, when to eat. I love to eat fat on the house. I love my little brothers that's locked up. Love Fat Thug always

-Fat T B5

From The Beat: We're waiting for you to really get tired of all this, Fat Thug. Oh, you write all the time how tired you are of being locked up, of being told what to do, of having no females to look at or talk to. But then you me right back here! So, how tired of it could you be?

I'm Back, But I'll Be Out

Hey, w'ats up, Beat? It's me, Smiley, and am back again with a new case. But am gone get out, like in a couple months an' go to a group home or L.A. Those are my two choices. Well, I ain't got much to say. I just hope to get out soon.

-Smiley B1

From The Beat: This reminds us once again that getting out is the easy part. You don't have to do anything at all but sit still to get out. But staying out is a different matter, and requires something from you. Obviously, you weren't able to give what it required, so what's your plan to succeed either in the group home or LA? Don't wait for others to define who you are and what your life is going to be; take some control and exercise it for your own good and nobody else's!

A Recipe For Success

For success I'll try to go to school more and try to do the right thing for myself, like doing good at school, and try to get good grades. Sometimes I think I should listen to my mom to do the right thing, but I didn't, so I will try to listen to my mom and do the right thing.

-Thomas B1

From The Beat: We often read the promises of incarcerated young people just like this, but then something happens when they get out of this situation and instead of keeping their promises, they end up doing just the same things they did before — with the same results. Will that happen to you? Will you write one thing in here but do another out there? You've given yourself two goals, take school seriously and take your mother seriously. Those are both excellent goals to try to achieve, and we want you to try very hard because, unless you do, we'll be seeing you again...

In My Room

In my room I think of you and what it be like to kiss your lips, caress your body. Damn you a hottie! You make me wanna get out and actually think about how many years I gotta do. Damn ma, why couldn't you come into my life earlier? Would I have treated you the same like I do now? Would you have stopped me from doing the crime? Probably not, but damn you always on my mind. Why I have to do the crime?

-Cartoon B5

From The Beat: To be honest, Cartoon, this is the first piece of yours that suggests you may be leaving childhood... finally! It's hard to know whether this new-found love is causing you to grow up, or whether the fact that you are growing up has allowed you to feel love for the first time. You will never know whether meeting her earlier would have made a difference (we doubt it, because we doubt you were ready for that difference before now), but looking backward is only useful if it provides a light along the road you're going to travel in the future. What you did in the past has led you here and to the Y — and away from this young lady. But what you do today will lead you to a different future, and — if you decide to do the right thing — may lead you to a decent place by her side.

I Want To Know Why

What's up with the Beat? Me, nothing. Same drama different hype. And I want to know why ninjas got my name in they mouth and speaking up on me, worried about what I'm doing. Keep my name out yo' chops.

-De'Aries B5

From The Beat: It seems like you're just as worried about what the next man is saying, and it seems like you got their names in yo' chops... So why not put your own name into focus for yourself, and not worry about what the next man says.

Thanksgiving

First I would thank my parents for believing that I didn't do anything. No one else believed me. It feels good to know that somebody knows I didn't do anything.

-Steven B1

From The Beat: You are very lucky to have such loyal parents, and we hope you will never do anything to betray that trust. Is it harder to be in here when you're innocent than when you really did something? Were you just in the wrong place at the wrong time? If so, how will you avoid coming back in the future?

I'm Tired Of People Telling Me...

I been living in her for three months and it been hard for me. Man, when you get out man, do right 'cause, man, I'm about to go home.

-Lil' ATL B5

From The Beat: We're happy for you that you're about to go home, ATL, but what are you going to do when you get there? You advise the next man to "do right," but we want to know how you plan to translate those words into action.

I Got Myself In Here

What's up with The Beat?
What's happen' on the streets?
Man, I'm in here stressing, can't sleep
Wake up every day getting told when to eat
Man, I need to be on the streets
My room so small, it make me want to shout
But I got myself here, I got to get myself out
I'm gone

-De'Andre B1

From The Beat: When you say, "I need to be on the streets," you're telling us and yourself that you're not free. Freedom is much more than getting out of here. Whatever is pulling you, the things that you just can't stop thinking about — the streets, smoking weed, your girl, even your family — those are the things keeping you from being free! Staying free is a lot harder than being locked up because you are responsible for your choices, and when you feel like you HAVE TO make certain choices, that's what keeps you from being free. You can be locked up and free; you can be on the streets but locked up. Getting yourself out of here requires nothing from you at all except to pass time. Keeping yourself out, though, that requires something, and in that "something" lies your freedom.

I Want To Know Why

I want to know why the rollas like to lock Black people up. I think it's 'cause they spooked of us. They be on our backs and lock us up for nothin'. I'm ready to get out this spot up in here. The halls ain't where we wanna be, so why they keep lockin' us up? Bra, I'm finna get it right so I can make it big, then change the way the rollas be playing us.

-Young Ant B1

From The Beat: As long as you're looking to "make it big," you will always be running from the "rollas" (who, by the way, you will never change... the only person you can change is yourself.) You say "they" lock you up for nothing (other than your skin color), and what that means to us is that you have not yet looked at your own responsibility for where you are. Yes, there is racism in the system, but there is much more than that going on or else all Black people would be locked up, and no Black people would be lawyers, doctors, teachers, Senators, Justices, actors, sports stars, businessmen, etc. (Does it surprise you to learn that there are more white people on death row than Black people? Why do you think that is?)

What Keeps Me Up At Night

What keeps me up at night thinking 'bout when I was on the outs, posted on the block with the homies, late night drinking or gettin' into it with enemies. Or being up all night wit' my girl, yadda-I mean? Or just chillin' with the family and how I ain't gonna see any of them for a minute. I'ma be doing the CYA.

-Cartoon B5

From The Beat: What bothers us about this Cartoon, is that we know you are not being kept up with thoughts of where you went wrong, but instead of thoughts about getting out and doing it even bigger! We hate to see anyone go to the Y because we consider large institutions far from home to be exactly the wrong way to treat juvenile offenders. But we hope that what you're about to experience there will give you the maturity you still lack because until you get that, you'll just keep putting yourself in the box — only the box will get deeper and deeper inside the system.

Thanksgiving

This thanksgiving I would personally like to thank my mom and my girlfriend. I would like to thank my mom because she's the only one that's by my side. Everybody else is against me but my mom, the only one that's sticking by my side. That's why I don't see why people disrespect their mom, because when it's all said and done, your mom is going to be the only one still by your side. That's why I would thank my mom and I just want to say, "I love you, Mom."

I would like to thank my girlfriend because even though I'm in here, she's still stayin' true to me. I love you, Sabrina. Thank you for stayin' true to me, even though I'm in the situation I'm in. I love you, baby. See you soon.

-Mike B1

From The Beat: Lucky you to have a mother and a girl who are there for you, Mike. Their loyalty and love must be a tribute to who you are, too. Now it's up to you to show them (in deeds, not words) that you are worthy of their loyalty by being loyal to them. You know what they want for [and from] you, so can you deliver? Do you believe that when you did whatever it was that took you from them, you put your own instant needs and desires ahead of them and ahead of your own long-term needs and desires (for an education, for freedom)? If you can see that, then you already know what you have to do when you get out. Right?

... I don't see why people disrespect their mom, because when it's all said and done, your mom is going to be the only one still by your side.

I Want To Know Why

I want to know why life is so messed up. The government ain't doin shhh for us. We need money. Well, I know I need money because without money, you can't do shhh. All they care about is their pockets getting fat, you know what I'm saying. So much need to be done, like we need a better education, not a jail education. Instead of building more jails, build more schools to help us. Y'all not helping us. Y'all against us. They not for us.

-Man Man B4

From The Beat: You write that "all they care about is their pocket getting fat," but it sounds like that's all you care about, too. You're right, of course, everybody needs money to survive, but the problem is that so many people want so much more money than they need to survive that rich people just keep getting richer — and often they get richer off your backs, which is why they're building jails but not schools! So it's really up to you to figure out a way to get your money (not to get rich, but to get by) so that you stop putting money into the system's pockets!

Life After Death

I'm tired of people telling me when I can get a book and when to talk and come out my room to get a stand-up or a sit-down. I just miss them happy days and just want to be home and just get out the situation I'm in right now and be free and fly away. 'Cause if I just spread my wings, I can fly.

-Macky-O B4

From The Beat: How do you spread your wings? How many times have you been here? How long has it taken you to get tired of all this? What are the specific changes you see in your future that will keep you out of here so that you don't have to hear all those things that make you so tired?

Confusion

I'm so confused in juvenile hall, I don't know what to do. I go to court on the 14th an all but they might try to keep me behind these four walls. I been messin' up on the outs, runnin' the streets and hanging out, tryna be wit' my ninja 24/7, but it got me nowhere but here. I guess that was a blessin', 'cause I would've got killed doing what I was doin' not realizin' my life was bein' ruined.

I think I should leave this guy alone but I'm still not sure. My head is all torn, but that's why I called this poem confusion 'cause I don't know what the hell I'm doin'!

-Paradise GU

From The Beat: The fact that you realize that coming in here might just be the blessing you needed to keep yourself alive tells us that you truly do see that now is the time to think of yourself and of your own future. The "he" in this piece sounds like he's not going to help secure that decent future for you, so now is the time to depend on yourself, to see what your own self-interest is, and to act on it. We know how hard it is to give up on someone you thought you loved, but someone who truly loves you will move heaven and earth to keep you out of places like this. Does that sound like him?

My Heart And My Brain

Brain: Enemy, if I fight, "new charges!" I'm a catch more time!

Heart: So what! (Go)!

Brain: Damn, just got off BMP. This teacher on my line. I mean I'm doin' the work! If I blow up on the teacher I'll get suspended!

Heart: No school. Forget it! I'ma tell him who he's talking to!

Brain: Now I'm in my cell, sleeping in late, work out, read a book.

Heart: I ain't tripping! His fault!

Brain: Man that pudding was good... Should I take his?

Heart: Yeah...

Brain: Damn! Locked up! Ain't getting out 'cause I hit that lick

Heart: I needed to do it. I was running low on money

Brain: Still, I shoulda just went to my girl's house or at least did it smarter...

Heart: Yeah, should of did it smarter.

-Cartoon B5

From The Beat: You're brain isn't working quite right. If it were, it would tell you that the only way to do a lick "smarter" is not to do it in the first place. Until you learn that simple truth, your brain and your heart will be locked up one way or the other...

Gonna Be A Nice Man

Well, who I want to thanks is my momma for being here for me. When I get out, I'm just going to be a nice man to all the women I loved. So yeah, I love you Beat.

-Markie B4

From The Beat: We think that being a "nice man" has its own rewards in the way you'll feel about yourself and in the way you relate to others. We wish you had explained the changes you plan to make a little better though, because if this is all you can find to write in one hour then we don't think you're really putting in the effort that will be required of you when you get out of here. Laziness is a habit that can undermine all your best intentions...

I Miss My Dawg

Man, I miss my dawg
Many nights we was on the block
Many nights we was blowing trees
Many nights we was hustlin'

Man, I miss my dawg
Me and you through thick and thin
Me and you to the very end
For only you I was in the game
I miss you, Ant
Gone but never forgotten

-Mike B1

From The Beat: As tragic as this is, Mike — and it's a tragedy that just keeps going on and on and on — we have to ask this difficult question: Did the life you and he chose to live contribute to the fact that he's no longer in this world? Is there a connection between his death (and your enslavement) and hustling, blowing trees and hanging on the block? How has this tragedy changed your life? And if it has not, how will you escape the same fate?

I Promise

If I could tell you anything,
I would tell you how much I love you and how much I promise to change
Remember the day you told me you love me and now we both doin' time
I promise you I love you
I promise you I'll never leave you
I promise I'll stick by ya side and never say goodbye
I promise you this and I promise you dat
But best of all I promise you my unconditional love
Once again baby, I love you

-Lil' Shorty GU

From The Beat: It appears that love is much easier to commit your words to than your deeds... You SAY you'll never leave this person, but here you are! You did leave! You found something else that you loved more, and you put it ahead of your "love" and allowed yourself to be taken away. You SAY you'll stick by his (or her) side, but the example you show by your behavior completely undermines that promise. So, what's it going to be, easy words or difficult actions?

Me And My Boo

I had the female shakin' out her shoe
She looking at her ninja like, "Babe what to do?"
He told me to hop in, and we went around a few
He said, "I like you and I know what you going through"
I'm a down-ass female, I'll do anything for my ninja
I sell, fight, steal... anything to make our relationship real
Any female hatin', they won't run up or tell me how they feel

My ninja is tough

When we make love his passion is rough
My phone stay ringin', he had to grab it and tell me that's enough

Then he start feeling, and kissing

Now I'm locked up, I am truly missing

Now I'm thinking of the day I went to school

Why did I go? It's cruel, not cool

Because I'm locked up and thinking about my boo

-Rosevette GU

From The Beat: Now that you're locked up, don't you think you should be more focused on coming up with a solutions to eliminate all possibilities of ever coming back to the halls again? In regards to relationships, do you really think that you will make it "real" by lowering your self-worth, disrespecting yourself and doing things that only land you back at the bottom? The question to ask yourself is this: is all the fighting, stealing, and selling worth it? You're paying some pretty minor consequences for those choices right now, compared to the much more serious consequences the system has waiting for you if you don't make some changes. If your "boo" puts you in harm's way (and juvenile hall is your harm's way), then it's time for you to start caring for yourself.

Going Home And Making That Change

I am gong through it right now. I had went to court today to see if I could go to court tomorrow which is Wednesday. But it all changed. I gotta stay here till 11/13/06 because my stuff, plus my damn PO brought up old-ass stuff from like six years ago when my dad had custody of me. But now my mom has custody and she want me back home just like I want.

I can't be here anymore. I either get out or transferred to Contra Costa. I'm hella scared. I want out, and I will completely change. I will look for a job and everything.

I want to know why that decoy is lyin' like she is. I'm tired of people telling me, "I told you so..."

I give a thanks you to my attorney and my momma for trying to get me back home. And I miss you momma!

-Steffani GU

From The Beat: We hope you will remember what you said and wrote here when you get out because we don't want to see you in here or any other juvenile hall again. Have trust in yourself and have courage. It is okay to be scared, but don't let this situation stress you out too much. Sooner or later things will be all right and you will be home with your mother.

I'm Tired Of People Telling Me...

That I can't succeed. People tell me every day that I won't graduate from school. People tell me that I can't play football, I'm going to get hurt, "Everyone's bigger than you; you're going to get hurt." When I get into a fight everyone thinks I'm going to get my ass beat. Forget them! All I need to say is, "Yes I can!"

If you don't think I can, you can think that... just don't say shhh, because I can do whatever I wish to do.

-Kevin B5

From The Beat: You are absolutely right, Kevin. You can do whatever you wish to do whatever people tell you that you can or can't do. So that leads us to this obvious question: What do you wish to do?

Ingredients To Self- Confinement

Uncaring person with a bad mentality
Drug-infested mind with no reality
Fists that cause many paralyzations
This is what's needed for self-confinement

If already incarcerated there's really not that much to the recipe
Just a little help and determination and all will come to be

-Vago B4

From the Beat: You've come up with a good recipe for failure. Now, what's your recipe for success?

I'm Tired Of People Telling Me...

Wassup Beat? What it do? Me, chillin', keeping it like fa the block ya heard. You know these stars shine baby, but man this topic caught ma attention.

I'm tired of people telling me to do hella shhh that they can't tell me to do on the outs or it'd be curtains on citaz. Telling me to line up and be quiet and shhh. I'm talking 'bout shhh that ma mama don't even tell me. Then you get time fa the weakest shhh, then try to talk to him, then they give mo' time. But I gotta shake the spot so I holla at ch'all next week.

-Al-Bundy B5

From The Beat: Yeah, it sounds downright shady in here! Of course, there is an alternative: Stay the hell out!

Why Do They Do Cruel Things?

Why did he play with my mind?

Why did he tell me "I care for you?"

Why did he come at me with material things?

Why did he turn me against myself?

Why did he put me in a position I did not want to be in?

Why did he tell me I was doing right when it was really wrong?

Why did he act he had full-played feelings for me?

Why did he make me feel like I needed him?

Why did I fall for him?

I catch myself asking all these questions, but I tell myself this all happened for a reason. But it's not my fault it happened! But at the end of the day I always do ask myself, "Why do they do cruel things"? He played with my mind and took my body! But let's not get personal.

I am gonna end this by saying I do forgive myself and do accept myself for who I am, and I will keep my head up! But I will always remember who did this to me, and it's very hard to let go!

-Lil' Miss Young GU

From The Beat: It is not your fault, so you should not be blaming yourself for something someone did to you. But we also think things happen for a reason, and the reason is that through experiences like this (both happy and unhappy), we learn how to do things differently the next time. We hope you can learn from this experience, then let it go, because holding a grudge will hurt you more than the person you're holding it again.

I Wanna Know Why

All my thugs is fallin' to this beef. I can't sleep
At night 'cause my crimes I've been doing make my conscience speaks

The man (white man or U.S government) put guns and drugs in them streets

I can't live in a proper community to raise my seeds

Every time I turn my head guns is trained on me

If guilt builds up in me fo' murkin' a ninja that was busting at me,

I shed no tears whenever it's a R-I-P

Because I'ma thorough-bred to these cold streets

-P-Dada B5

From The Beat: You don't really want to know why your "thugs" are falling, because you already know. You've given the answer in that last line. If you're a "thorough-bred to dese cold streets," then you're playing the game the system wants you to play — the game that puts both your life and your freedom at risk. There's really no mystery here. If you don't know the answer to the question that titles this piece, then you'd better start asking different questions!

MARIN

Was I Just Yo' Boy Toy?

I thought the love we had was true

But you know what I see when I look at you?

I see nothin', 'cause you played me, fool

What do I look like? Some five-cent hoe?

You didn't just play me wit' two, but you played wit' four

Well, guess w'at? I ain't no little sex toy

Taking my chances an' givin' it up

But, lately, I realized that this wasn't love

-Beatriz

From The Beat: A boy toy is a guy that a girl just plays with, Beatriz, so don't you mean, "Was I just Yo' Girl Toy?" Whatever, being played by anyone, especially someone you're hanging with and love, really hurts. You're right, you're not anyone's toy. Great for you that you stood up to this jerk. Unfortunately, you're right again—what you describe isn't love. Hold out for the real thing. You deserve better.

A Costly Lent

One time I lent my brother my, \$210 Luis Vuitton sunglasses that my dad gave me, he took them to school and broke them, and he gave them back to me. He owes me 210 dollars.

-Paige

From The Beat: Was it an accident or in purpose? If it was an accident, can you give him a little break? He's your brother.

Writing

I write because some time I feel like writing. Sometime I am mad and I just say I will write because I get upset. I write because it helps me calm down. So that's w'at I do.

-J-Boy

From The Beat: That's beautiful. Writing is a great way to put it out there whatever you're going through. That's a good healthy therapy to clam down the anger.

My Family

If I had a few hours of freedom, I would spend time with my family and my grandma, because you can spend time with your friends when you get out.

Your family is more important, and you can spend time on the block when you get out of the halls.

-No Name

From The Beat: Your priorities are in pretty good shape. But, it seems like you're still have the mentality of popping pills. Do you know what it does to your brain every time you pop one? How dangerous it is? If not, it's time to take of that band off your eyes and inform yourself.

I Wish I Could Tell You

I wish I could tell you that I love you and miss you.

I wish I could tell you that my heart aches when I'm not with you.

I wish I could tell you that I want you to have my kids.

I wish I could tell you that you have the sexiest lips.

I wish I could tell you that you have the sexiest hips.

I wish I could tell you that you are my baddest chick.

And I also wish that you can get this.

I love you.

-James

From The Beat: You feel very romantic towards this special person, James. Why don't you copy this lovely poem and send it to whomever you wrote it to?

Sad, Scary Story About Halloween

This scary Halloween story was in Mexico. There was a party in a cemetery. And then there was a story that in the cemetery was a person that hung himself to a tree. The party was on Halloween. In the cemetery he began to hear voices. Then the person appears in the tree dead. Then all the people never did partied again.

-Luis

From The Beat: Scary! Isn't it? Thank you for sharing.

Demons, Elves, And Pink Flying Elephants

One day I was walking down a forest.

It was dark,

but there was a little light provided by the moon. About five minutes later, the ground started to swell and I started seeing demons and elves.

I was scared for a little while,

but then I began laughing

for about two hours straight.

I saw pink flying elephants, elves,

and then I remembered

I had taken 'shrooms and two hits of acid.

-Cuervo

From The Beat: That's a trip, but don't you think it's potentially dangerous to take those drugs, especially mushrooms and two hits of acid at the same time? What are you trying to do to your poor brain/body? Do you know how many young people have died over overdoses of these substances? If not, you should educate yourself.

Mostly, I Think About Money

Yes, a lot of things keep me up at night. When I'm getting out, how I'm going to get racks when I get out. Thinking about moms keeps me up. But I mostly think how I'm going to get money.

-Pee Wee

From The Beat: Now, what will provide you with the money you want so badly? How about getting a job? That's how you can earn some dependable money. So what kind of a job would you like? What are you good at? What do you enjoy doing? How can you get a job doing something you love and still make some cash?

Always Living The Crazy Life

Que paso? Como te va. Siempre viviendo la vida loca. (What's up with you? Always living the crazy life.) Thank you for letting me be in The Beat!

I want to say, "Gracias" a mi madre, por darme la vida y por darme tanto amor, (thanks to my mother for giving me my life and so much love.) But I never hear sus consejos. (I never listen to your advice.) I'm sorry, mom, because I was so stupid. You always tell me to do good things, to not fight in the school, to not smoking, not to get drunk. I'm sorry, mom, I'll change my life. I promise. See you soon. Peace out, vatos.

-Jonny

From The Beat: When you have a mother who gives you so much love and good advice, why don't you listen to her? Do you need to learn everything for yourself? Okay, that's normal for a teenager. Now that you've learned for yourself what's going to mess you up, have you learned that lesson well enough to keep yourself out of trouble when you're free again? We hope so.

Help Me

Can you help me? Ya' ninja ready to go to the Y? I ain't ready to go to the Y because I have a life at sports and that's my ticket to reach that higher level.

They dropped my weight from 16 to 6 max, but I'm gonna see how I can work my mouthpiece, and go to R.O.P. or get out on adult probation. And make it right.

-Henry

From The Beat: Going to an alternative might be too late, but at least the system is giving you some years back to your life. Check it out! Doesn't six sounds better than sixteen? We hope you find the strength you need to go through this hard task. Use your head and discipline to educate yourself, to become a better athlete/person, to fix the way you think. Stay in touch!

Thanks Mom

I want to thank my mom, because she has stuck with me through everything.

-Hugo

From The Beat: She must be a pretty terrific mom. You're lucky to have her. How are you going to show her how grateful you are for her loyalty and love?

Thank You, Dad, And Thank You, Carol

I'm thankful for my dad. He's always there for me, no matter what, whether I'm right or wrong. If I'm bad or good. I'll know he'll always love me.

I'm thankful to Carol, the counselor here at Marin County Juvenile Hall. She's been there for me. All the time I'm here, she's helped. Made me realize a lot of things. Finally being someone who cares.

-Snow Bunny

From The Beat: It's terrific that your dad and Carol have been there for you so consistently, but what's happened that you've lost trust and confidence in yourself? Can you honestly assess whatever you've been up to, especially whatever brought you into juvy, that you don't approve of in your heart? Figure out why you did whatever? If you can stop yourself the next time you're tempted to do whatever, once you're out again, that will mean you're starting your life over. Can you give yourself a fresh start?

My Family Has Done Everything To Help Me

This Thanksgiving I'd like to thank everyone in my immediate family first. They have stood right next to me through everything my whole life. Especially recently, my family has done everything they can to help me. They've sent letters packed with stuff to see and look at. I thank them.

-Family first

From The Beat: You're really fortunate to have such a wonderful family. They must think you're pretty terrific, too, to have stood by you. Sometimes being in juvy is just shocking enough to get teenagers to wake up and not mess up again. We hope you're in that category and that your gratitude to your family will translate into you keeping your freedom for their sake, as well as your own.

Stupid Gangs

What's good? It's yo' girl, Snow Bunny. Well, I used to rep, ya know? Bang a gang, but I got out all that shhh, 'cause all it causes is drama. Too many of my people got hurt and almost killed 'cause of all of that.

My brother Charlie moved to LA. I haven't seen him in hella long, but I've still kept in touch and have talked to him. When he was walkin' in the streets wit' all his ninjas at 1:00, he was killed in a drive-by in September, because he liked a gang they didn't. I personally think gangs be stupid. All that shhh is a color!

-Snow Bunny

From The Beat: We're sorry for your loss. The gangs you've gotten yourself away from can also be dangerous, as you've learned from the death of your brother, so it's all well that you're out. Stay away from them if you want to live a better life without a risk of ending up in jail forever, ending up in a hospital or hurt by others. We would give everything we got so all of those who are in gangs think of gangs the same way you do.

Recipe For Success

I think you need a stable environment and supervision. You also need a great education. You need to stay away from drugs, alcohol, and cancer sticks, so you can think straight. You need to stay away from the juvenile facilities.

-Hugo

From The Beat: You've got all that right! We're all vulnerable to messing up in some ways. What of all the things that can bring you into juvy is your vulnerable point? What do you have to do or not do, to keep your freedom?

Moms

I wish I would tell you how much you hurt me. I wish I could tell you how happy you make me. I do tell you that I love you, mom, and always will. I remember when I was a kid, you were there and not there, but now you're here. Here for all time—each visit, and I love you.

-Big T

From The Beat: It's amazing how vulnerable you can be to your mother. Sometimes it can seem like she can hurt or heal you like no one else in the world. It's great that now she's here for you, especially now that you really need her. When you're free again, can you help her out, and stay out of trouble and out of juvy? Show her how much you appreciate her!

God In My Life

A recipe for me would be to have whatever to get a successful future. A main ingredient would be God in my life.

I want to know why people always assume I'm a bad kid, who can't stay out of trouble.

I'm tired of people telling me I'm a failure.

I want to thank my grandmamma and whole family. And God, last but not least.

-God's child

From The Beat: You seem to be really grateful for life. As hard as it may be for you now, especially if people are telling you you're a failure and assume you're always going to be in trouble, isn't your real challenge to determine what's really true about who you are and who you are becoming? It does hurt when people have the wrong impression of you, but there are things you can do about it—like stay out of trouble and get something going in your life that you truly care about, that will show yourself and others that you're capable of doing something legal successfully. Can you talk to your grandmother and/or God and tell whomever what your dreams and plans are? Get them to help you in any way you need!

I Want To Know Why

I want to know why I was in a foster home
I want to know why my mother didn't
want me
I want to know if I wasn't the only one
she had or is it just because I was bad
I came to Walden House to do better so I
feel like my life will be clever
I don't know why, but I do not want a
better life

-Oriana

From The Beat: We can imagine few things worse than the thought of being abandoned by our mother. We don't know what was going on in her life at the time, and maybe things were very hard for her, but when you bring a child into the world, you've made a promise. She broke that promise with you, so your feelings are completely understandable. The only thing that isn't understandable in this poem is that last line. What do you mean you do not want a better life? You may be nervous about thinking of getting a better life because you don't want to be disappointed (again), but if we asked you what you want for yourself in this world, we bet you would describe a better life than the one you've had up to now.

Thank You, Mommy

Someone in my life who I would like to thank is my mother. My mother is a huge part of my life and has been with me through thick and thin. I want to thank my mom for putting up with all of my bullcrap and all the crap that I put her through, as well.

In my addiction to meth, I did a lot of things to people who care about my well being that were messed up. But no matter what I did to my mom, she has always been there for me.

Thank you, Mommy.

-Sara

From The Beat: It's so easy to take our mothers for granted, isn't it, until they're no longer there to love us, to guide us, to correct us. When we're young, we think they don't know anything about our lives; we even sometimes call them names that we later regret. But as we get older and more mature, we see our mothers for what they really are — our one true support system, our one true source of unconditional love. We hope you show this to your mother, Sara, because she will want to see these words and feel your love. You know how much she has sacrificed for you, so now it's time to pay her back with the love and respect she deserves.

RIP Gerald

I was on the freeway today having a nice time, listening to music and suddenly it's traffic. I'm like, "What is going on? It's so slow!" And as we get up further, I see an ambulance and fire truck. I see the car that crashed and I see a dead body with a yellow plastic bag over the body.

It's crazy how people are dying left and right, and a man that was doing beautiful things.

-Jazz'ah Belle

From The Beat: We're very sorry about Gerald's passing. We're not sure from reading this whether he was the accident victim you saw, or whether seeing that just made you think about him. But either way, you're right: it is crazy how many people are giving up the one thing that they can never, never get back.

Emerging From The Fog

She tried so hard but she could not break,
and worms ate into her body, mind and soul.
She was so spun out that every other word that came out of
her mouth
was "tagment" and "ay fool."
Now her days are like a cesspool
full of mood swings and loss of memory.
But there are good things too.
Every day I wake up late,
but definitely ready to participate
instead of isolate.
PSK Walden House is where my world is not fake.
Others say I'm weird, but to me I'm freed
from the wrath of time's chains,
depression and pain
and know that there is more to gain
than drugs and street fame

-Lil' Faco

From The Beat: Even though we want to instruct you on how to write the letter "E," we appreciate what you wrote here. It sounds like you are learning things about yourself and the drugs you took that are helping you see the world and your place in it with more clarity. You are not weird! You are struggling to emerge from the fog of drugs and a life that can only end badly unless you make the changes your sober mind clearly sees that you need to make. Just keep thinking... and writing!

Why Am I Still Here?

I want to know why I'm still here. I've had so much crap happen in my life. So many things that I shouldn't have survived. I've over-dosed so many times, I've almost died countless times. So, why am I still here?

There must be something or someone looking out for me. I must have a purpose in this crazy world. That's all I can think of.

-Ashlynd

From The Beat: Of course you have a purpose in this world, even if finding that purpose becomes part of the purpose itself. But nobody is guaranteed tomorrow, so we hope you think about what you've written very carefully. If someone or something is looking out for you, maybe the message is that it's time for you to start looking out for yourself!

Stop Comparing Me To My Father

I'm tired of people telling me that I'm just like my father. My father is locked up and has never been a parent. I'm a young female and haven't been locked up or a parent yet, but the way I've been acting I've been pretty close to it.

I'm tired of people telling me that I look like him because I've never really seen him. It really upsets me because I know of him and know how much he has hurt me and my mother. When people tell me that, then I feel I'm hurting myself and my mother as well. I don't want that.

I'm tired of people telling me that I'm like my father, so I'm going to change the way I act, think and how I react to the way people say things.

-Pinky

From The Beat: Our experience is that, even if your father was not locked up and even if he had not hurt you and your mother, you would still not want to be compared to him all the time. We all want to be our own person, not merely an extension of a father or mother — even when we love them to pieces. So we understand why you don't want to hear this. But in your case, since much of that comparison is based on behavior (you can't do anything about the similarity of looks), you do have some power to change how people perceive you and therefore how they react to you. Whatever people say, you are you and not anybody else!

Why Do People Hate?

People always hating on the next person when a person trying to take it to the top. It's always gone be them people that want to see you fall on your face. But to be real, you can hate on me for the rest of my life, but I'm gone be me until the end of my time here on Earth.

-Jazz'ah Belle

From The Beat: We think most of that "hate" is generated by jealousy and feelings of inadequacy. For some strange reason, it seems to make people feel better about themselves when they have someone else to look down on. Forget them! Work on yourself. You'll be fine!

Recipe For Seafood Spaghetti

Sauté onions, garlic, mushrooms, shrimp, oysters
and crab
Boil noodles/Put salt or oil in so the noodles
won't stick
Drain oil from the sautéed seafood
Put in sauce
Drain water from noodles

-Kirstin

From The Beat: Well, you've definitely made us hungry, Kirstin, but we asked for a recipe for success, not a recipe for seafood spaghetti! Maybe if we go home and try this recipe ourselves, we'll feel successful when we've finished eating it!

Tired Of People

I'm tired of people telling me what to do. I'm tired of people telling me how to live. I'm tired of people telling me what to say and not say. I'm tired of people telling me what to and not to wear. I'm tired of people telling me what I already know.

-Lacey

From The Beat: Forgive us for telling you what you already know, Lacey, but if you deal with the problem(s) that have kept you from moving forward with your life, you won't have to be tired of any of these things in the future. When you become the responsible adult that you were meant to be, all these people will be asking for your opinions, not telling you theirs!

Gumbo Stew

I can cook a lot of stuff. Anything you give me I can cook. My favorite recipe is gumbo.

But now I don't want to hang on the block no more, and know, I don't want to sell that shhh no more.

What I want to know why is why am I so beautiful? Why did I sue my beauty to get what I want? Why am I so smart? Why am I intelligent?

I'm tired of people telling me who I am, telling me that they been there before. But you know what? I'm a whole different person. I'm not you. I'm me. we are different.

I would like to thank my father for always being there for me, for taking me in when I would run away. Thanking him for holding me down when I was struggling.

-Peaches And Cream

From The Beat: P&C, we know that you wanted these to be four separate pieces, but we have put them altogether (like a gumbo stew) to show you that you need to focus on one topic. We just keep asking you to write only about one thing, and write a lot about it. If you read all these pieces together, you can see that each of them could be developed and expanded to make it more meaningful. So please, next time, write a whole page on ONE TOPIC! Thanks.

I Want To Know Why

I wanna know why the government hide stuff from us. Why killers get away? Why is it ghetto made? I wanna know why... I'm tired of people telling me bs about other people. I'm tired of the system. I'm tired of police, lawyers, POs and COs.

-Maria

From The Beat: We'd like to know why the government keeps secrets from us, too, but we're not holding our breath for them to tell us. But the real point of this "From The Beat" is to tell you that your "Recipe For War" was totally inappropriate for The Beat, and we will not publish it! In case you have not been told, The Beat will not print a recipe for murder, will not list a collection of weapons that — especially in the hands of children — contribute to the epidemic of violence that plagues our cities and our country. As long as this is the recipe on your mind, you will just keep being tired of the system, police, lawyers, POs and COs because, unless you change your thinking, you'll just keep putting yourself back in their hands. We're waiting for you to grow up, Maria, but we won't allow you to disrespect The Beat before you get there.

Lo Que Extraño

Que onda? Esta es mi segunda vez escribiendo. Espero que pongan esto. Les quiero decir que me van a mandar a San Bernadino. Ya quiero salir de aqui para estar con mi familia.

Extraño a mi jefito y a mis hermanos, a mi jaina. También quiero hablar con mi jefita. Extraño sus regaños. Pues, tengo dos meses de estar encerrado. Cuando salga me voy a poner a estudiar o a trabajar. También yo extraño los regaños de mi carnalito cuando trabajabamos juntos. Ya no voy a enojar a mi jefito. Nos miramos.

From The Beat: Tienes que ser paciente y buscar la forma como terminar el programa que te asignen. Es la única manera como podras salir de ahí. Nos parece buena idea que busques la manera como hacer las cosas bien y evitarles disgustos a tus familiares. ¿Que tienes planeado hacer para mejorar tu vida? Esperamos que no pierdas el sentido de tus metas, porque o si lo haces todas estas palabras no tendran sentido.

What I Miss

What's up? This is my second time writing. I hope y'all put this in. I want to tell y'all that they are going to send me to San Bernadino. I want to get out of this place as soon as I can so I can be with my family.

I miss my father, my brothers, and my girlfriend. I also want to speak with my mother. I miss her scolding me. Well, I have been locked up for two months. When I get out, I am going to either start studying or work. I also miss the reprimands I would get from my little brother when we worked together. I am no longer going to get my father angry. I'll see y'all later.

-Luis, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: You have to be patient and find a way to finish the program that they assign you. It is the only way you will be able to get out of this place. It sounds to us like a great idea that you find a way to do things right and avoid bringing sorrow to your family members. What do you have planned on doing to better your life? We hope that you do not lose the purpose behind your goals because if you do, all these words will have no meaning.

Estoy Enojado

Hey que pedo homies? Soy Soldado escribiendo de Nuevo. Les voy a empezar esto con hablar un poco de mí. Ahorita estoy un poco enojado porque me encontraron contravando y me van a dar más tiempo aqui.

Me siento con ganas de correr de aqui de nuevo, pero no puedo porque tengo que terminar mi programa. Si corro de nuevo me van a mandar a CYA. Por eso mejor no corro de este programa. Algún día voy a salir de aqui para poder regresar a mi casa, poder estar con las personas que amo, y poder ver la vida de otra forma.

No voy a andar haciendo pendejadas. Si voy a regresar a mi pandilla, pero cada cosa que vaya a hacer lo voy a hacer bien. No voy a volver a caer preso nunca. Un saludos a todos los catrachos.

From The Beat: Nos parece muy bien que estes haciendo lo posible para salir de este lugar. Aunque se nota que no estas cumpliendo con las reglas del programa, y eso va a hacer que tu tiempo se haga más difícil. En la otra mano, queremos preguntarte una pregunta: ¿Por qué tanto esfuerzo si estas pensando en volver con tus homies? ¿No crees que estando con ellos vas a caer otra vez? ¿Que haras cuando ellos te digan, "hey estas down en hacer este jale?" ¿Que vas a decir?

I'm Mad

Hey, what's good, homies? I'm writing to y'all once again. I'm going to start this by talking a little bit about myself. Right now, I'm a little upset because they found contraband on me and they are going to give me more time here.

I got the urge to run from here again, but I can't because I have to finish my program. If I run again, they're going to send me to CYA. That's best, it's best that I do not run from this program. One day, I am going to get out of here and be able to return to my home, be with the people I love, and be able to see life in another form.

I am not going to go around doing stupid things. Yes, I am going to return to my gang, but everything that I do, I am going to do it right. I'm never going to end up under arrest ever again.

A shout-out goes out to all people.

-Cruz LCRC

From The Beat: We want to increase your shout out to include all people who are locked up! We're very pleased to see that you are doing whatever is possible to get out of this place. Although we can tell, based on your piece, that you are not obliging with the rules of the program, and by doing so, it will only make your time more difficult to do. On the other hand, we want to ask you a question: Why are you putting in all this effort if you're thinking about returning with your homies? Don't you believe that being with them you're going to end up getting locked up again (or worse)? What are you going to do when they tell you, "Hey, are you down to do this move?" What are you going to say?

Lo Más Preciado De La Vida

Que onda? Soy el Soldado escribiendo de Nuevo. Esto es para mi mama. Primeramente, quiero pedirle perdón a mi madre por mi vida loca. Quiero que sepa que pase lo que pase siempre la voy a amar.

Si hago lo que hago no quiere decir que no la amo. Solo estoy viviendo esta vida. Se que algún día ella tiene que dejar este mundo y yo también. Sólo estando muerto vamos a poder vivir sin miedo a nada.

Para mí ella es todo. Aunque yo decida ser un malinate no quiere decir que yo la voy a mal tratar. Hago lo que hago y nada lo puede cambiar.

Me despido. Antes que pase lo que pase algún día vamos a morir y no hay nada que se pueda hacer. Si quieres cambiar tu vida, hazlo, no lo pienses dos veces. Si no puedes cambiarla se sincero contigo mismo y con tu familia, con tu novia. Es todo lo que puedo decir.

From The Beat: Es cierto, algún día vamos a morir, pero eso no nos da el derecho de vivir la vida de una manera negativa. Eso no nos da el derecho de buscar la muerte cuando no nos toca morir. ¿Que ha sido tu decisión? ¿Viviras siempre viviendo la misma vida? ¿Buscaras como cambiar por tu madre y tu novia? Se nota que eres muy inteligente y que sabes sobre la vida, pero te hace falta mucho para saber que la vida hay mejores cosas que andar en las cosas que has andado. Esperamos que una luz te llegue pronto y te separe de esa negatividad que estas viviendo.

The Most Precious Thing In Life

What's up? This is for my mom. First of all, I want to ask my mother for forgiveness for my crazy life. I want her to know that regardless of what happens, I'm always going to love her.

Just because I do what I do, that doesn't mean that I do not love her. I'm just living this life. I know that someday, she has to leave this world and me, too. Only when we're dead will we be able to live without fear of anything.

For me, she is everything. Even though I decided to be a troublemaker, that doesn't mean that I am going to treat her bad. I do what I do and nothing can change that.

I bid farewell. Before whatever may happen, happens, someday, we are going to die and there's nothing that can be done about this. If you want to change your life, do it; don't think twice about it. If you cannot change your life, be sincere with yourself and with your family, with your girlfriend. That's all I can say.

-Cruz LCRC

From The Beat: It's true; someday, we are going to die, but that doesn't give us the right to live life in a negative manner. That doesn't give us the right to seek death when it is not our time to die. What has your decision been? Will you always live the same life? Will you look for a way to change for your mother and your girlfriend? We can tell from your piece that you are very intelligent and that you're knowledgeable about life, but you still have a lot to learn to know that in life, there are better things than being involved in the things that you are involved in. We hope that a light shines on you soon and that it separates you from that negativity that you are living.

If you cannot change your life, be sincere with yourself and with your family, with your girlfriend. That's all I can say.

Si Tubiera Dos Horas

Si a mí me dieran dos horas, estaría con mi familia, mi novia, fuera a la playa y me divertiera. Despues fuera con mis homies a jugar pelota.

Me acuerdo cuando estaba afuera con mis homies, me tiraba un puro de mota y me sentía bien relajado. Despues me iba a casa y me la pasaba viendo tele, despues me iba a la cocina, abría el refrigerador, abría una cheve y me la tomaba. Despues me ponía a ver tele de nuevo.

From The Beat: A lo mejor por fumar y tomar fue la razón por la cual estas aqui. ¿No crees? Creemos que tu familia es lo más correcto para pasarla bien. Busca la manera como hacer cosas más positiva que no te puedan meter en problemas para evitar muchas cosas.

If I Had Two Hours

If they were to give me two hours, I would be with my family and my girlfriend. I would go to the beach, and I would enjoy myself. Then, I would go out with my homies and play ball.

I remember when I was on the outs with my homies, I would smoke a ton of dank and I felt very relaxed. Then, I would go home and I would pass the time watching TV. Then, I would go to the kitchen, open the refrigerator, open up a beer, and I would drink it. Then, I would go and watch TV again.

-Melsar B1

From The Beat: Maybe the reason why you find yourself where you are today is because you smoke and drink? Don't you think so? We believe that your family is the best choice to have a good time. Look for a way to do more positive things that cannot get you in problems and avoid many things.

DENNISE We're starting the week off with a bang. How are we doing that, you ask? Well, we're giving you this next incredible young poet out of one of our most loyal juvenile halls. And it isn't even in the bay area. Writing from Durango Juvenile Hall in Phoenix, Arizona, she gives us a few things to think about as she hits us with many ideas in each of her four poems. She starts off with one about how her situation is causing her to feel discouraged, but we know from poems like, 'Sister To Sister' she has the strength to rise above and conquer what she needs to. She's fourteen years old but shares a wisdom with us that we can't find in most adults. We wish her the best and hope she can continue to release the haunting images of her past through the power of the pen.

Why?

This morning I woke up wondering why
Why do I think back on the moments we shared?
Remembering a time when there was no doubt you cared?
Why do I deep trying to pull you away from you fears
When I can only be near?
Why do I kneel on my knees every night a pray
To god that you'll be alright tonight?
Why must everything remind me of you,
The sun, the stars, and even the moon?
Why should I cry and keep trying
Knowing deep down that I'm dying?
Why do I remember the way we used to dance?
Why do I remember the clothes you used to wear?
Why when I close my eyes I see you standing there?

The Dream

I had a dream of a girl
A tortured pain filled girl
Everyone left her so far in life
So she sits and stares at the butcher knife
She picks it up and draws it near
She looks in my eyes
I can feel her fear
Then her life flashes before me
Then the pain comes as quick as rain
The rain is playing the touching game
The pain left shutting the door
That was just the first part
The pain she felt was just the start
Then I saw pools of blood
A little girl lay in the mud
They thought how terrible this could be
Until they realized that little girl was me...

LAWRENCE SMITH The brief letter we received from our old friend Lawrence Smith — Professor Blackmind — was too good not to share it with our Beat family. We have known him since he was 16 years old. From the beginning, he revealed his impressive gifts as a thinker, a writer and a poet — both those gifts have not prevented him from falling back to old habits and conditioning more than once. That is why we are so encouraged by this piece of self-reflective reality that came to us in a personal letter. By the time this is printed, this teacher will be out of Sacramento County Jail, struggling as before to move forward without falling back. We pray that he can avoid the many minefields that lie in his path...

Feeling Old And Tired

This letter is very much overdue, but I hope it finds you in good health and high spirits. It's been quite a while since I last wrote and I felt it was only right that I give you an apology and an explanation. I received The Beat you sent me with my pieces in it. Thank you for not forgetting about me and letting me know you still care.

I've been in this solitary confinement cell for the past five months, doing a whole lot of soul searching and planning for the future. I've prayed and I tried to get a better understanding of myself. I just turned 21 on October 5th and I just began to understand that what I have done to myself was self-destructive. I have made no real attempts to give up the fast life and live right.

I have come to the conclusion that the life I was living

Killing Me Softly

Trapped in my own world
Reaching for my mind
Floating around fears
Shutting every door keeping the answer away
I don't know if I can stand to live another day
Between the truth and lies
There will be light
But I have given up
Because I can't fight it
The past is not remembered
But only what lays ahead
This pain inside of me
That's slowly killing me
My words fall like soldiers everything I block out
So my only escape
Is the hysteria that does not talk at all

Everyone left her so far in life So she sits and stares at the butcher knife

Sister To Sister

To my sister
That I think about every day
She was so different than the woman she is today
She met the wrong man and got into drugs
Then went on her way
Leaving three others along the way
And all they do is pray
That she'll come to her senses and come home one day
They can't understand what they did
To make her change her ways
They blame themselves till this day
But this much I have to say
That we choose our own paths and live our own life our own way
We can't go blaming ourselves everyday
But the blame is ours don't you say
To live up to your mistakes each day
So stay away from drugs is all I can say
Because some day your family will be gone for life

— drugs, gang bangin', stealing — is not the life for me. That life has taken so, so much from me, things that I will never get back. I will never be able to get back the years of my life that was taken away from me. That lifestyle has aged me. It has made me so old and tired. I am burnt out on it, and I'm ready to move on, for good.

It's taken me a while to come to this realization, and I have never been more serious. I have witnessed first-hand the effects that drugs can have on people. I have seen people turn into zombies and do all kinds of self-degrading shhh to get their next fix. I've seen the before and after situation. I've seen smart and successful people get hooked on dope and turn into those fiends you see running up and down the block looking for the dope man. They'll give you anything, and I mean absolutely anything, for a blast. I see those people and they are my worst nightmare because I don't ever want to turn out like them. If I would've continued doing the reckless things that I was doing I would have definitely become one of them, no doubt about it.

These past few months I have not communicated with anyone, not friends or family. I took that time to read and pray and establish goals for myself, so I'll be prepared when I get released on December 6. I am closing this chapter of my life and I am ready to move on. I apologize for not checking on you these past months. I promise to keep in touch from now on. I was just waiting to introduce you to the new me.

The Dead Road

All my life I never felt like I belonged. At fourteen I was seeing a girl who introduced me to the music of the Grateful Dead. There was something about the unique quality of their songs that spoke to me. I saw the Jerry Garcia Band in Philly on a Halloween night while on LSD. What the F--- is going on here? I continued to listen and explore their music. When I first saw the Dead at the spectrum in Philly I simply had to have more of whatever it was that was going on there. I immediately traveled to upstate NY to see the Dead just days after my first shows in Philly.

I started running away at the age of 10 so to travel state to state to hear this one of a "KIND" music was real easy for me to do. The following year I saw 57 grateful dead shows. This was the year that I first went to Cali. I bought a bus ticket from Philly to San Fran with money I was making from selling LSD on the east coast. When I arrived in the terminal in S.F. I had a dollar in my pocket! When I stepped off that bus standing in front of me was the dude that was selling me acid. Dude looked at me and said "what are you doing out here?" I was home.

I trucked on down to Santa Cruz to San Lorenzo Park where some of my dead head boys from the east coast were. They fed me, gave me what I needed to make my own way to the shows and I was a 15 year old east coast dead head in the Golden state!

My boy and I hitched to Palo Alto to see shows at Frost Amphitheater and then up to Oregon and Washington state for more shows.

I kept calling home to speak with my mom and to tell her that I was in Cali, Oregon and Washington. She refused to believe me and thought I was at the Jersey shore again where I had ran away too many times before. It wasn't until she received her phone bill that she realized that I was on the west coast.

I had never felt the feeling of being on psychedelic drugs while listening to the dead play anywhere else in my life. It became my place of worship if you will.

Do not confuse my description of "what happened" with promoting a lifestyle that includes the use of any drugs. These days for me, while exciting and almost spiritual, were the genesis of me becoming a HARDCORE DRUG ABUSER. Knowing that in the now is how I wake up in my cell and feel "just being alive" as a gift my incarceration seems a bit more bearable.

Like any young person I identified with the music I love and the lifestyle that went along with the sub-culture. I simply didn't know that there would be life-altering consequences from my actions.

I continued to play the game and to do whatever I needed to do to continue the life I felt I was meant to live. I was creating a life that would bring much hopelessness and despair to myself as well as my loved ones.

By the time I was 18 there were only 5 states I hadn't been to. I watched the Dead perform in 42 of 45 of those states.

Some of my boys were always staying on the same hotel floor as members of the band. We were doing everything that they were doing except playing the music at the venue. Wherever the dead would play became transformed from a stadium, arena or amphitheater into a place where magic would happen. We were a nomadic tribe living life to the extreme realm of reckless abandon.

In my next correspondence I shall continue to take you on the "DEAD ROAD." I'll leave you with these lyrics from a dead song called "victim or the crime"

"Patience runs out on the junkie
The dark side hides another soul
Did he steal his fate or earn it?
Was he force fed? Did he learn?

Whatever happened to his precious self-control?"

RENO Drugs are such a big part of a lot of our lives. Whether it's simply marijuana or something as serious as heroin, there seems to be something powerful about putting a stop to your feelings whenever you want to. Or should we say something 'falsely' powerful because when you stunt your emotional growth by using drugs, you become addicted to that power and ironically become powerless. This next writer recognizes this about himself in retrospect. And the way he does it paints a picture that's clear to see. Sometimes the lifestyles that are the most exciting are the ones that are most harmful in the long run. We've heard tales such as these time and time again and each time it makes us cringe knowing more times than not the people telling them are really kind hearted. He's writing from Riverfront State Prison all the way in Camden, New Jersey. And if you like his story, stay tuned because he promises to send us the sequel.

Hey Now Friends At The Beat Within!

Thank you for providing a forum for me to express myself. Seeing something that "I" wrote in your publication was very exciting. Guess I was pretty revealing about myself. I'm very grateful that you've welcomed me into your space. It means so much to me for you see while incarcerated physically, imprisonment in that context is no comparison to the mental prison I merely existed in for my entire life. Freedom from that prison has been the most profound experience in life for me thus far.

It is my hope that there will be someone who may identify with my expression and be moved and inspired to find a way to express themselves.

As a teenager my father would tell me how he would roll up the windows in his Caddy while my brother and myself were infants in the back seat. He would smoke weed until we feel asleep.

Help I've Been Robbed!

As a teenager my father would tell me how he would roll up the windows in his Caddy while my brother and myself were infants in the back seat. He would smoke weed until we feel asleep. I watched him use drugs my whole childhood and couldn't wait until I had the "freedom" to use how he used. This was an attractive glorious thing to me as a child.

At 7 I was drinking beers at parties. By 10 I was smoking weed daily and experimenting with benzo's and barbiturates. At 12 I was shooting Meth and by 13 I was droppin' acid. Introduced to cocaine at 15 and finally heroin at 22. I spent years chasing those feelings. Combining different substances with different music and different sexual scenarios. Always chasing and running.

There are many ways to describe "using." People use all types of things in our "free" society. Little did I know I was building a prison for myself from which I could not be with people anymore. My mind held me captive and drugs were the prison guards.

I married at 17 only to watch my wife die of an overdose. I had a baby girl with my wife. Only to tell her that her mom would never be coming home. I had many dreams that I rolled in paper and smoked, drew up in a set of works and shot or simply drank away. "I" was robbed. I was robbed by a dis-ease within myself that only perpetuated itself through the illusion that I would feel good from using drugs.

To the depths of dereliction. Sub human animalistic existence. Self-obsession became a way of life. My capacity to FEEL anything that remotely resembled human emotion was removed from my core. I was stripped down to being a shell of a person who would do "anything" to get just one more.

Then the day came when I was just tired enough of the struggle to walk into a bank to be the robber only to come into N.J. State Prison to realize that "I was robbed!"

EUGENE WEEMS Here's one of those writers for himself in *The Beat* as far as we're concerned. His imagination breeds creations that blow our minds away time after time and it is our pleasure to introduce him again in this issue. This week, he sends us a fiction short story that keeps you wondering about its main character, Pockets. As he and his friends imagine away (maybe his friends are even figments of his imagination) about what they possess, what skills they have, and what they're planning to do, you can sense a child like innocence within their circle. He leaves you wondering whether or not Pockets and Razzle-Dazzle were able to obtain the trophy they were longing for throughout the story. Maybe — maybe not, but whatever the case this story is a really good read. He's writing from Salinas Valley State Prison in Soledad, CA, and we want to take this time to thank him for everything he's shared with us. We have a feeling there will be more to come, so we're waiting...

A Short Story

Pockets is the name and golfing is the game. Are you ready to do this Razzle-Dazzle?

"To do what Pockets? Do you mean what I think you mean?" Razzle-Dazzle asked.

"That's right Razzle-Dazzle, time to break the worlds record! We will be world famous," said Pockets.

"I'll love to be famous Pockets, hurry up and take your shot. I want to show the world I'm the greatest golf ball that ever lived! Every one will know my name, Razzle-Dazzle the great!"

"O.K. Razzle are you ready to do your magic? Here we go. One, two, coo-coo, coo-coo, coo-coo!"

"What's that awful noise Pockets?"

"It's all our fans cheering for us, I think? Oh no wait a minute, that awful noise is the alarm clock."

Hurry Pockets, please turn it off. It's the worst noise in the world."

"Oh man Razzle! I can't find the clock. I forgot what Pocket I put it in. Its time for me to get up out of bed."

"Pockets... Pockets! Are you awake yet?" shouted Pockets mother.

"Yeah mom I'm up," said Pockets sleepishly. He stretched out his arms to the sky and yarn. He had been dreaming.

"Pockets your breakfast is waiting for you hurry on down before it gets cold. I discovered a new recipe. I think you will be surprised when you see it"

"Oh no one of moms new recipes again! I hope I can hide it in one of my secret pockets" Pockets said to himself.

"Who are you talking to Pockets?"

"Ah...Ah...I'm just talking to myself mom. I'll be down in a minute mom." Pockets turn towards his golf ball and said, "Okay Razzle-Dazzle, time to get dressed and start the day."

Pockets dressed in his favorite overalls that had many extra pockets, he never could remember what was in them all. He looked at his bookshelf that he kept empty and said to Razzle, "This is where we will put our worlds record trophy. Every one will know our name. No one will ever hit a golf ball farther than us!"

"Pockets! Who are you talking to?"

"No one mom!" Pockets shouted back and turn toward Razzle-Dazzle and whispered, "Okay Razzle-Dazzle, time to climb back into our secret pocket so no one see you. We better hurry before mom come and see you."

"There you are Pockets. What took you so long?"

"Oh, nothing mom, just looking for my overalls."

"If you would keep your room cleaner, you would find your things easier. And by the way, you know, I know I heard you talking to some one in you room."

"No I was not talking to anyone mom, just myself."

"Pockets, you know people will think you're crazy if you keep talking to your self."

"Yeah, I know mom, but no one will think I'm crazy after I break the worlds record for hitting a golf ball the farthest."

"What!?" said Pockets' mom in shock.

"That's right mom. I have a secret weapon. I'm going to hit a golf ball farther than anyone in the whole world!"

"Son you have a very creative imagination and some times you seem to let it get a little out of control. Now eat your pancake cereal."

When Pockets saw the bowl of pancake cereal he was confused. Is mom serious? This stuff would scare the

boogey man right out of the closet! I know what I'll do. I'll hide it in one of my secret pockets so mom thinks I ate it. He thought.

"Well Pockets how do you like it?" asked mom.

"Ah...ah... sure, yeah I like it."

"Great! Tonight we are having hotdog salad."

Clearly mom's cooking was what was out of control, Pockets thought. "Yeah mom, I can't wait to see it. Can I go outside now?"

"Sure Pockets, but don't leave the front yard and please keep your imagination under control. We don't need to have the fire department having to get you out the tree again."

Pockets get excited and runs out the door to play. He wonders what is imagination?

As Pockets began to walk across his front yard, he stops in the grass and looks up at the sky at all the planets and their weird shapes. Then he wonders what kind of world records are up there? And said to Razzle-Dazzle, "We will set the record in all the worlds."

"That's right Pockets we surely will, because I am the greatest golf ball that ever lived."

"Pockets, who are you talking to?" a soft voice asked but Pockets was lost in his imagination.

"Pockets, did you not hear me? Who are you talking to?" Sparrow shouted at the top of her lungs this time to get his attention.

"Stop yelling Sparrow, I can hear you."

"Well, I've been trying to get your attention, but you just kept on talking to your pocket. Who are you talking to in there? Asked Sparrow.

"It's a secret, no one will ever know, but why are you sitting in that kangaroos pouch Sparrow? You look funny in it."

"My kangaroo's name is Hee-Haw. And I'm never ever coming out of this pouch. You're the one that looks funny. Talking to yourself all alone in the grass. So are you going to tell me what's in you pocket?"

"No way! It's a secret. It's a friend that's going to help me break the worlds record in all the worlds!"

"Oh stop acting silly again Pockets! You going to make people think that you are crazy."

"I'll show you and Hee-Haw silly and crazy" and so Pockets reached into one of his pockets and pulled out the pancake cereal he hid from his mom. Then he put it right into Hee-Haw's face. Hee-Haw's eyes grew big, his face disappeared, and began hopping all over the front yard out of control.

"Hold on Sparrow!" shouted Pockets.

"Its ok, I'm used to it" shouted back Sparrow.

Sparrows pig tails were bouncing all over the place. But this time Hee-Haw was upside down. "Do something Pockets."

So Pockets dropped the pancake cereal onto the grass. Then reached into one of his many pockets and pulled out a siren horn and pushed the big red button, it blasted the most shocking siren noise ever heard even the tree people in the forest heard it.

"Holy smoke Razzle-Dazzle! That kangaroo just jumping himself silly. Good thing you found that siren horn?"

"Hey Sparrow look! Pockets is talking to that secret pocket again."

When Pockets looked up he saw his friend Lift-Off wearing a funny looking cape and springs on his shoes. "Why are you dressed like that?" asked Pockets.

"I'm the greatest super hero in the world! My name is, Super Lift Off! My cape is not funny lookin'! Why are you talkin' to your pocket? What's in there? Let me see!"

"Yeah" said Sparrow "let us see what's in your pocket."

"No way! Get back! No one will ever know my secret!"

Sparrow and Lift Off looked at each other and said to Pockets at the same time. "You sure are acting crazy!"

"Oh yeah? Look who's talking, look at you guys. One in a cape and has springs for shoes, and the other is in a kangaroo pouch. You're both the crazy ones! Not me."

"Come on what's in your pocket?" both friends asked.

"I always forget I have so many pockets, I'm always losing stuff."

"Well, do you know what's in that one?" Sparrow pointed at a pocket. Pockets reached in. This pocket must have been super huge, because his whole arm had disappeared in it. When he pulled his arm out, he had an entire train set. The

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train fell to the ground and was choo-chooing all over the front yard, right over the siren horn, and smack right into the pancake cereal.

"Cool!" said Lift-Off in amazement. Hee-Haw was getting excited again and started to bounce around the train crash. "That was a fast train," said Sparrow. "I'm faster," said Lift-Off. "I'm so fast, I make space rockets look like snails!"

"No way!" shouted Sparrow, "Hee-Haw is the fastest."

"Have them race Pockets"

"That's a wonderful idea Razzle-Dazzle."

"Who's Razzle-Dazzle?" asked Lift-Off.

Pockets didn't answer the questions.

"Time to race," he said as he dug deep into a pocket that he almost fell in.

"Where's he going?" asked Lift-Off.

"What's he looking for?" asked Sparrow

"What is he doing?" they both thought.

"He's gone mad, watch out, run for cover!" yelled Sparrow. The sky was full of Pockets imagination.

"Run Lift-Off before the space ship smashes you!"

Pockets was still emptying one of his pockets into the sky. All his ideas and daydreams came crashing down into the front yard. "Has the sky stopped raining junk?" asked Lift-Off.

Both of Pockets' friends had took cover behind a tree and in the bushes.

"Is it safe to come out?" asked Lift-Off. "Where did all this stuff come from? How did this stuff get into your pockets?"

"I don't know" Pockets admitted. "It just be there in my pocket."

"Explain the space ship," said Lift-Off.

"There is nothing to explain! I use it all the time. That's right I find myself in space whenever I want."

"You have lost your mind! You never been to all the worlds," a new voice spoke.

"Who said that?"

Everyone turns towards the voice. It was they friend Daisy. "What a mess," said Daisy. Pockets' front yard was filled with junk.

"Hey Daisy... What's in your wagon?" asked Sparrow.

EUGENE WEEMS (CONT.)

"These are my new inventions. I'm just taking them for a walk.

"Can they fly or go fast?" asked everyone.

"Stop acting like children. My inventions are the best in the world," shouted Daisy. "Look this little tree grows ribbons that smell like candy and this one grows teddy bears. I'll never run out of toys. Stop that! Stop eating my ribbon tree, you crazy kangaroo."

Coo-coo! Coo-coo! Coo-coo!

"What's that awful noise?" asked Daisy.

"Hurry! Hide me" panicked Pockets.

"Turn off the alarm! Hurry!" said Razzle-Dazzle.

Pockets reached into another secret pocket and pulled out the weirdest looking clock anyone has ever seen.

"What's wrong?" asked Daisy

"It's lunch time. My mom's cooking is out of this world!"

"No way!" said Lift-Off. "You are out of this world."

"What's for lunch Pockets?" asked Sparrow

"Hotdog salad."

"Oh no! Everyone was shocked, Hee-Haw was getting excited and bouncing in circles not believing his ears.

"Hurry Pockets. Here she comes." said Lift-Off.

"Hide me, hide me!"

"There you are Pockets. Time to come in now, I made your favorite, hotdog salad."

All of Pockets friends fell to the ground laughing at him. "Bye Pockets! Good luck! See you tomorrow." Said his friends.

Every one went home and Pockets walked into the kitchen.

"Well did you have fun today?" asked his mom.

"We sure did. I think we found my imagination."

"Oh Yeah! Where was it hiding at all this time?"

"It was in my pockets! I'll never lose control of my imagination again. I'll always be the master of all my thoughts and ideas!"

You shot your own cousin' in the knee over a sale for ten dollars.

ROYAL LEIJA We love when people challenge the rest of us because that's how you learn and rise above adversity. Sometimes we need tough love to actually reflect on what we're doing as a way to change. This next writer does just that as his title suggests it all, "How Far Are You Willing To Go" as he points out irony after irony of what it means to gang bang... And after reading it, it makes us wonder why anyone would want to gang bang in the first place. Well, to each its own, we guess but when you see this piece, which was sent to us from the Charlotte Correctional Institution in Punta Gorda, Florida. Thank you for challenging us...

How Far Are You Willing To Go

Look at your back and face ninja, you been shot at by rivals in the varrio. You been jumped at in a pool hall by people who the same skin color. Look at your mother and baby-mother. Look at the pain you put them in. But instead you continue to gang bang for your varrio and fight for a flag. That hangs around your neck or hangin' out your pocket. Who are the names and faces you got tattooed on your chest? Yea' the jainas loved you but for what? Oh yea', for your money. 'Cause if it was real love then she or the other jainas would write you.

Look, you been kidnapped in Texas by rivals 'cause they wanted to take you out of this world. 'Cause of your crazy flag you kick in doors with your ninjas, to feed your set and your familia. You been big on the streets but in prison you ain't nobody. You seen your own ninja shoot himself in the head. 'Cause the F.E.D's was hot right on him. You made your own girl sleep with a vato for nine hundred dollars. You ran from the police and been bit by a K-9 dog on your leg. You shot your own cuzin' in the knee over a sale for ten dollars. You seen your baby-mother get jumped by rivals in the mall. You got a jacket of tattoos on you with dots on

your right eye. Now you can't get a good job at all.

You been to boot camps and four programs in the hall, plus the jail. You jumped a crackhead 'cause he ain't buy dope from you. Your cuzin' been smoked by the police in a crack house in Los Angeles. Your ninja been found killed in the varrio. You been to funerals a lot, but you continue to play. You been in high speeds by yourself and with your homies. You never had time for your baby girl who was only a year old. Now she nine years old an' doesn't even know you.

You broke your grandma heart 'cause she seen you shoot that car up that night. 'Cause the dope man didn't want to sell you a 8-ball. You wasn't around for your girl when she had your baby. You jeopardizing your vida. You drop out of school 'cause you was too cool for school. You been cut in the chest by your baby-mother 'cause you was caked up, and you was going to beat her sister 'cause she took your heat.

You been flagged in Florida and Texas as a gang leader, but you are a gang member. But you don't care about nothing. You in prison runnin' with the head leader of a chapter in the whole state of Florida. You been in a riot in prison. You sock and lock your own raza for his canteen. Your familia loves you, you have a family who has a low rider car club. Your baby-mother is workin' to become a D.J in Texas. Your homies respect you 'cause you step back out the gang and the game.

Yea' this is everything I been in when I was in the game, can't believe what I been in with my vida. To all the homies in the game ask yourself, "How far are you willing to go in the game?" Thank the game for where you at homie. Yea' the game sorry brother, it's played out to the third base.

PRETTY BOY Some people's hearts are so caring that the mere presence of their words can relax the soul. Especially in times where we seem to live in a world full of people who are so disconnected with the struggles and hardships that most of us go through. Our diamond in the ruff is no stranger to The Beat at all. Carlos Houle aka Pretty Boy has been writing amazing works of art for us for a very long time now. And we really are grateful to have been able to receive such a big part of who he is. This week, he stays true to 'Pretty Boy' form as he shares an inspiring letter with two poems that may make you wonder how someone so good with words can be in the position he's in. It's a saddening fact because he has the potential to do great work out here. But anyhow that's not the point, the point is that he's reaching out to us all in his letter letting us know that anything's 'possible.' He's touching lives with poems like, "Searching For Our Hearts," where he makes it evident that he's a true leader that people may find helpful to follow. Or like the poem to his mother where he captures the essence of sacrifices 'good' mothers make in order to pave a better path for their children. Thanks for birthing such a great person mom. We hope you get to read this because we know it'll bring a smile to your face as it did ours. He's writing from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA. Thank you Pretty Boy... You have a pretty soul...

To My Momma

My momma I wanna say that I love you with all my heart
For bringing me warmth when I was cold and light when it
was dark

I really can't express how thankful that I am
That you took care of me as a child and helped me to be a
man...

For when I was down and dragging my feet
You gave me words of encouragement and pushed me to
succeed
When everyone turned their backs for they were my so-
called friends

It was you that was there from the beginning to the end
And when everyone gave up and didn't want to help
It was you that was there to listen to how I felt

I know I messed up and did some wrong things
And with the tears in my eyes momma I'm sorry for
everything
You are a very strong woman wit' so much wisdom and
insight
That puts a smile on my face and makes my days so much
bright

So it is such a blessing and I'm honored to be your son
And I'll be there till the end for you
'Cause you've been there since I begun!!
Dedicated to my loving mother Susie Lopez.
You're cherished so very much.
A true blessing sent to us from our father up above.
"I Love You."

Searching Our Hearts

As I look upon the sky that very enchants my heart,
I know I must attempt to truly try to start
Learning the ways to surpass all of these tests
That heavily worries my mind leaving no time for some
rest
Do you ever stop and wonder as you look upon the sea?
And wonder why are we here, yes, you and me?
There must be a purpose as also the waves do roll
A mystery is to be found where a truth is to be told...
As a new dawn arises and as I open up my eyes
I reach toward the sky for my dreams that are very high
I must have courage now as I fly like an eagle
I need to soar for myself and need to soar for my people
Many storms I have flown many seas I have passed,
Never give up is my answer to those who may ask
Some have seen too little and some have seen too much
But never fear dreams are never too far to touch
For as we look upon the sky the search we then start
Finding the treasures in our lives by searching inside our
hearts!

To: The Beat

First off allow me to say that I hope this letter finds you all in happiness and a "smile" for surely I'd want it no other way. I'm in hopes that all the young gente out there is doing mas firme and that comes from mi corazon. Well brothers/sisters let's start the topic at hand:

I've been reading and it seems a lot of you are going through a lot. So many different feelings it's kind of confusing to all address. But once again your boy is here and I'm going to extend a little wisdom and insight. In life we at times focus more on the negative then the positive. This can cause a big mistake on our part and a lot of worries that ain't really necessary.

Life is (not) easy and anyone who told you it was lied to you all... Being successful in this world can be hectic and even obtaining all we desire is very hard to do. But it's also "possible"...

We think in the negative sense a lot don't we? Which leaves me to ask do we take things for granted? The situation you find yourself in ain't as bad as some others! (Wait) if people have gotten through and succeeded in worse circumstances than you, then what does that mean? (Yes there is hope for us all.) Everything we encounter on our journey in this world may and will not be always explainable.

So many mysteries that it can play with our minds and drive us crazy if we try to find an answer to everything. So what do we do is the question, correct?

This is what we do brothers/sisters we learn to "adapt"... to do so will take an open mind and the attempt to do what?

Yes you knew this was coming... "To stop thinking in a negative way." For once let's not focus on the problem (rather) let's focus on a solution to fix the problem!

But then you may ask what about the things that you cannot change? What do I do then? Well once again I'll say it, we "adapt!" all the time in life we use words like: "That's too hard." or "Impossible" or "It can't be done." Or how about this one "I can't do it."

What would the world be like if for everything we thought about or did we came to one conclusion to fix all of our problems? "Possible"... Possible should be a word of hope because where something is possible it means it (can) be done.

So that would then mean that it is "possible" for me to be a real man/woman, it is "possible" for me to get out of here, it is "possible" for me to succeed... It is then "possible" for me to change!

My beautiful brothers and sisters allow your mind to expand like the waves expand over the sands. Use your corazon as a source of strength to get through these hard times. You can do it for the ability has always been with you! Your heart was saying, "Let's do this we can get through this together..." but your mind was deceiving you... Yes it's true at times we can be our worst enemy. But since it's "possible" to (change) it doesn't have to be that way. Brothers and sisters whatever you're going through is only for a season... How long that season will last I do not know but what I do know is that it won't last forever!!

Pick yourself up... Dust yourself off... Look that problem in the eye and say I won't run no more... I'm sick of you banging me around and guess what I'm not letting you ruin me anymore!!... CHANGE... ADAPT... POSSIBLE, 3 strong words to live by and remember: CAP= (Change): when we change we then adapt. (Adapt): when we adapt no matter the situation or circumstances anything is possible. (Possible): The possibility to what we can do and accomplish is endless!!

Well family I will end there for this week. Just wanted you all to know that I love you all and you're all in my prayers... Remember to let no one get you down. And always remember where there is a will, there's a way.

Remember when things get hard, when things seem like they can't even get better, when it seems like you have to give up. Remember the word "Possible."

Well I'll conclude at that, take care, and be good... if you can't be good then be careful.

Start Where You Stand

Start where you stand and never mind the past;
 The past won't help you in beginning now,
 If you have left it all behind at last ...
 Why that's enough, you're done with it, you're through,
 There is another race that you have planned,
 Don't give the vanished days a backward look
 Start where you stand!
 The world won't care about your old defeats,
 If you can start anew and win success,
 The future is your time and time is fleet,
 And there is much work in strain and stress
 Forget the buried woes and dare despairs,
 There is a brand new trial right at hand
 The future is for him who does and dares
 Start where you stand.
 Old failures will not halt, old triumphs will not aid
 Today's the thing, tomorrow soon will be,
 Get in the fight and face it unafraid,
 And leave the past to ancient history.
 What has been, has been. Yesterday is dead,
 And by it you cry neither blessed or banned.
 Take courage, be brave and drive ahead
 Start where you stand!

Today's the thing, tomorrow soon will be,
 Get in the fight and face it unafraid

Thoughts Of A Convict

Some day the gate will open
 And once more I'll be free;
 A fact that makes me wonder
 "What will become of me?" ...
 Have I a future awaiting me;
 Such as the past I've known;
 Will I be accepted by others
 Or forced to walk alone?
 Are there opportunities of employment?
 For a convict such as I?
 Or will I have to steal again or prostitute
 In order to get by?
 What of the friends I once knew
 But haven't seen in years;
 Will they accept my friendship now
 Without any doubts and fears?
 What is there awaiting me,
 When I go out the gate:
 Is there yet a chance for me?
 Or is it now too late?

RYAN Finding a higher power to believe in regardless of what religion, can be a life changing experience for the better. We've heard many who were 'lost' find themselves through religion and each time we do, it inspires us even more. This next first time writer, who also sent us an incredible piece of art, found, "The Way," through Jesus Christ. In fact one of our favorite lines in his poem is, "I bang Jesus and have nothing to fear." We like it because he illuminates the passion he has for Jesus for everyone to see. For we all know that when someone represents something in the magnitude of the way a gangster bangs his gang, you can be sure loyalty and dedication are ever present. He writes us from San Quentin State Prison in San Quentin, CA.

The Way

Here I am at San Quentin again
 Lying to myself thinking the devils my friend.
 His lying tongue has again led me astray
 But never again 'cause Jesus has showed me "The Way"
 I was once a knuckle head, ran with the cause
 I was once firmly trapped in Satan's powerful jaws.
 I once let the homies poison my mind.

JUDITH Again we're so glad to have someone like the person who introduced us to this next writer on our team. We don't want to say her name too much in this issue because we don't want to take away from introducing the actual writers, but her first name starts with Rhonda and her last starts with Jones. Anyhow, she introduces us to an incredible poet that makes your jaw drop in awe after reading her stuff. From explaining what's wrong with 'our youth' today to offering motivational titles like 'start where you stand,' this woman can speak about anything. And not only that but she does it so well, sharing many ideas with but a few words. She's writing us from the Connecticut Correctional Facility in Niantic, Connecticut. And when you read her poems, we guarantee you'll want to read them again. Learn from her as we did and await her next installment as we will.

Our Youth

Today we face a national disgrace;
 The wasted lives of our youth:
 Who seek to find their peace of mind
 In fantasy rather than truth ...
 Our youth today often now display
 A trend towards self destruction;
 In which they adhere to primitive fear;
 Of progress and production ...
 Devoid of pride they seek to hide
 The truth of what they are;
 Flaunting laws to proclaim some cause
 In essence obscure and bizarre ...
 False power, that soon shall sour
 And youth wake in alarm;
 To discover their bliss of nothingness
 Devoid of any charm ...
 Such is the case of our disgrace
 These fantasies of our youth:
 Who choose to believe and be deceived
 Rather than face the truth!

Thoughts In The Night

While lying here in my cell tonight
 Unable to sleep, my mind runs riot:
 I review my memories from the past
 And wonder why time's gone by fast
 I think of the days when I was a child,
 Just a carefree kid out running wild
 My thoughts of the future were often shattered;
 By things of the present that didn't even matter
 As I grew older my ways were the same;
 I had the idea, life was only a game
 So to win I cheated but instead I lost;
 And as a loser, I am paying the cost
 But as I ponder these thoughts in the night;
 And begin to see that my past wasn't right.
 I plan for a future that I hope will be;
 A way of life, that will keep me free.

And I kept coming back time after time.
 No more shall I lie to myself, no more shall I defile myself,
 I will pick up my cross and deny myself.
 Jesus is right everyone else has been wrong
 I've got the lords armor on
 And you better believe that it's strong.
 I bang Jesus and have nothing to fear.
 The lord has been good to me as I sit on this tier.
 Jesus has showed me the truth, the light and the way
 And I honor his wisdom day after day.
 No more seared conscience, lying words and dashed dreams
 I now know the truth I'm on Jesus' team.
 For now on I've made up that I will stay up,
 And I won't give up till I've prayed up, paid up!
 And preached up they way to Christ
 For I am a disciple of Jesus the rest of my life.
 So I wait again for another beautiful day
 And I contemplate my path that does not lead astray
 And hold my head high while walking "The Way".

RHONDA JONES Our very own spiritual pioneer is back on the scene with a bang as she gives dedications to those she's lost in her life. But before we go on with our normal introduction, we want to take this time out to show how much we appreciate Rhonda. For not only has she given her life over to God and been by far our most consistent and dedicated Beat spiritual advisor, but she's also connected us to more people who want to follow in her path to righteousness. And we can't express in words how grateful we are to her for that. She's been through a whole hell of a lot and has opened her heart up to our pages for all the world to see. She's a true angel and we are blessed to know the name Rhonda Jones while in this lifetime. This week she pays tribute to the many family and friends she's had pass over while her life moves on. And you can see in each 'R.I.P.' piece her heart brings about a very loving and nurturing energy. Seeming to always be looking at the cup half full, we need more people like Rhonda connecting with us because this work can be discouraging. You know, hearing all the sad stories, the horrific images, the realities of so many of our young people's lives. Rhonda introduced two new writers to us in this issue alone, not to mention all the pieces she's written for us. She truly is a trooper. At the time this was written she was in the Connecticut Correctional Facility in Niantic, Connecticut, but we're elated to say that when this gets published she'll be a free woman. And if we know her like we think we do, this won't be the last time we hear from her. She's a woman on a mission and we're glad she's taking us along for the ride...

Wayne's smile

I know that it's only
Been a short while
But today I want all of you
To remember his smile
Remember him laughing
Remember him when he
teased
Remember him when he
said
Thank you or please
Because we loved him
Even when he was wilding
We loved him in his hat
When he use to be styling
So when you picture him

In your mind
Remember his smile
And the way he use to shine
Just always remember
His warm smile
Because that's what gave
him
His own unique style
Wayne was blessed to still
Have the heart of a boy
And that's why he blessed
Everyone with his joy
Wayne Jeffries
One of Bridgeport's finest
Our hearts grieve
That you are now minus

To My Father David R.I.P.

I wanted to write
An obit about my dad:
But thoughts of him
Only makes me sad
My mom always said
That he was no good;
But he often would appear
In our neighborhood
It's because of my mom
That my dad was so deprived;
Taking away his will
To want to survive
My mom should have kept that
Between her and him:
Instead of depriving him of his children
So this is why thinking
Of him makes me sad
Because I'll never know the father
I could have had
Now that my dad
Is gone;
There is no way that I
Could right this wrong
Now I know that
My dad was a trooper
And in my heart
He'll forever be super

Reggie Newly RIP

Reginald was the type of person
Who had a kind and generous heart
Some took this as a weakness
Deeming him not to be smart
But had Reg
Been put in position
He was a natural born genius
A electrician
He loved to fidget
With electrical gadgets
Repairing them
Was Reggie's magic
And because he didn't mind
Using his muscles
Reg always
Had a hussle
Anybody could go to him
And ask them to give them a hand
And that's what
Made Reg a man
So my heart goes out to Reg
But not with sympathy
But to let him know
I'll remember his company
Reg, was known
For his random acts of kindness
And that's why we will grieve
That he is now minus

When you remember people who have reached their
death, it makes you value the time that you have left...

To Gunns, Wayne Jeffries RIP

Wayne considered himself
To be a lady's man;
He was kind and generous
And always willing to give a helping hand
He loved people
And he went out of his way to get along;
And although he could fight
He'd avoid that because it's wrong
Wayne was also
Very caring;
And whatever he had
He didn't mind sharing
Wayne would come around
And say what's up people:
And he treated everybody
As his equal
And when it came
To respect
That was something
He was taught not to neglect
Wayne was truly
A gentleman
And we were blessed
To have him
So I'm writing this to you
To tell you that you're missed
But in our hearts Gunns
You will always exist.

In Remembrance

When you remember people who have reached their death, it makes you value the time that you have left...
It makes you think of the things you wish that you had said; but now you can't because they are dead.
It makes you, even wonder; are they up or are they under. They are also there to encourage us to survive, and in our hearts to keep them alive. So I advise you not to wait; to say I love you, before it's too late...
So say it loud, and say it clean; say it now, while they are still here. Even if it's just a hug; don't wait too late to share your love...
Don't wait too late to share your love... So love me now, while I'm alive; Or don't come to my home-going with all that jive.

Alyse Brantley

My dearest cousin Alyse
 May your soul rest in peace
 She was born into a rough life
 So she knew many days of strife
 Ever since her feet hit the sole
 Her life has been a constant turmoil
 Not a day of her life was even easy
 So at times she got brash and sleazy
 Her heart was a continued ache
 And the truth she refused to fake
 At times she could be very sarcastic
 That's because she was real not plastic
 She was sometimes angry sometimes sweet
 These endearing qualities made her complete
 It seemed like her path was scarred
 Because Alyse's life was every bit hard
 She too was hard as life could get
 She turned to drugs an alcoholic
 Drowning her sorrows and feeling the blues
 Alyse was tired of being used
 She was rescued and this is not a façade
 Because her heart often, cried out to God
 It was when she tried not to surrender
 That she'd relapse and go another bender
 God would give her the courage
 To pick herself up again
 Until the day, she'd go home with Him
 So this poem is for you Alyse
 May your soul, rest in peace.

Darryl Jones My Brother RIP

My brother Darryl
 Passed away in my house
 Leaving me with guilt
 Stronger than a louse
 Because I always wondered
 What could I have done
 That could have changed the fate
 Of his situation
 I failed to see
 I had no control
 That God determines
 The life of all souls
 So it took a long time
 For me to see
 I have no control
 Our destiny
 His destruction
 Was prearranged
 So there's nothing
 I could have changed
 And all the tears
 That I spilt
 God erased
 All that guilt
 Darryl was a
 Sweet brother to have
 And now his memories
 Make my heart glad

STARR WATKINS

Oh, how we love poetry here at The Beat. We love it so much that when a poet like this next one connects with us, we want to do everything in our power to keep her happy because although this is her first time writing, we can tell we really would like to get to know her through her incredible writing. She starts us off with a bang in her first poem, "Time Never Stands Still," as she describes how life seems to stop when you get incarcerated, but for people out here time is still moving — the world rotates. And though it's a harsh reality, it should be made aware of so as not to feel discouraged whenever that fact becomes unbearably evident. Then, she closes with two poems expressing her love, and from poems like these it's obvious that she has a way with words that can either soothe you or make you feel chills down your spine empathizing with her experiences. Thank for such amazing writing. We hope to hear more from you. She writing from Valley State Prison in Chowchilla, CA.

Time Never Stands Still

When you live your life fast and go by your own will,
 You realize time keeps moving, it doesn't stand still
 For my bad choices in life a high price I've paid
 But you can never go back and undo the mistakes you've made
 Sometimes I look in the mirror and I don't recognize
 who I see
 Is this someone else or is this really me?
 I wish I could go and turn back the hands of time
 When I was in control and my life was mine
 If I could have one wish I'd erase all my regrets and fears,
 I'd turn back the clock, oh say about twenty years
 You can believe in the illusion or you can see what is real
 Life goes on outside these walls, and time never stands still.

Sometimes I look in the mirror and I don't
 recognize who I see

Is this someone else or is this really me?

I Dream

I dream of a place where there are waterfalls and skies so blue.
 I dream of togetherness when I am with you.
 I dream of a perfect place where wishes all come true,
 A place that was made just for me and you.
 I dream of castles and stairways to the sky.
 I dream of soft clouds and laying by your side.
 I dream of strength and being safe from harm.
 I dream of sleeping deep within your arms.
 I dream of being able to see you.
 I dream with all my might
 That one day I'll be able to hold you all through the night.
 I dream of sunshine, the most beautiful weather,
 But my biggest dream of all is that we could be together.

Deep Inside My Dreams

I dream of a Valley Paradise where the air is sweet and clean,
 with horses running wild that make a perfect scene.
 Where life could be perfect and things never seem to go wrong,
 where days are so short and the nights, oh so long.
 Where there are no disappointments and beautiful waterfalls for everyone to see,
 a perfect kind of paradise, made for you and me.
 Where there's nothing to distract us and we're ok on our own,
 this is the perfect place for us to be alone.
 Come and take my hand sweet heart, and dance with me,
 under the trees, I will hold you close, while both of us are kissed by the breeze.
 I see all these beautiful things although; I am not sure what it means.
 I'll go back to sleep now and see you in my dreams.

NGO Raymond Ngo, aka NGO, has just graduated from San Francisco's YGC Log Cabin Ranch down in La Honda, California and we at The Beat Within hired him to work as an intern the next day. Congratulations, NGO! And welcome! We really appreciate your presence in this office and hope you can grow into a major role here at The Beat... Keep up the great work...

A Queen

A queen you don't have to crown
 She know how to hold it down
 'Cause she so special an' rare
 She is hardly found
 I'm on my search for that special one
 'Cause I can't be messin' wit' these girls
 These girls ain't trustable
 Can't even turn your back
 'Cause they gonna holla at yo' bros
 I wanna trust someone
 That won't do something behind my back
 So I won't know
 So sick ad tired of this bullshhhh they puttin' me through
 Brokenhearted permanently in my soul
 An' I want someone to help me heal that broken heart
 Inside my soul
 'Cause gangstas need love, too
 To take away the pain
 We resort to drugs, money and violence
 'Cause we really hurtin' inside
 And that ain't koo'
 Actin' a foo'
 And running the streets
 Is the next best thing to love
 I ain't lying
 I'm just telling y'all wassup
 When you get hurt so many times
 You can only hold in so much
 Until all emotions erupt

It came to me naturally
 Like it was hidden in my soul
 Hidin' for too long
 Now it explodes

Who I Feared When I Was A Child

Who I feared when I was little was my family
 Not really feared, more like respect for my family
 Didn't really fear no one, because I didn't know
 Was just being a little kid, having fun an' lettin' life take
 its toll
 Doing good was what I did; it was in my soul
 But now I'm older, I'm doing bad
 I can't help but sin from my head to my shoulder to my
 toes
 Everything gets harder when you grow a little bit older
 Now I rep my hood an' having fights wit' older cats
 I wanna know where my childhood at
 Now tryin' to change my life around; it's not simple, but
 that's how it is
 I can't turn my back, 'cause this is what I want for myself
 And I'm a fight like I always been fighting, but in a good
 way
 This NGO spitting some real shhhh, and I don't care what
 the haters have to say
 My life my story--I'm the one living it, and you only on the
 side, talking hella shhhh
 I do what I have to do just to make things right; my life is
 like a puzzle--everything fits
 This not no bullshhhh, but some real shhhh; remember that,
 because everything I say is facts

Real Homies

Yea, real homies stay, but witches com an' go
 Witches come in different shapes an' sizes
 From the snitches to da ho
 Take this in consideration—mind, heart and soul
 'Cause when shhhh goes down
 They'll show their true colors
 'Cause you might think they really koo
 An' treat 'em like brothers
 But they really witches
 An' they'll snitch like the others
 You may not want to believe this
 But I talk the truth
 They want to get close to y'all
 Make you not believe the truth
 Be careful in who you trust
 And whoever you trust, keep 'em close
 But also check 'em
 'Cause they might mess you ova
 Even if they close
 NGO talk the truth
 So listen to what I got to say, homies
 To all the homies locked down
 Keep y'all heads up
 'Cause we miss y'all, homies

What's Life?

What's life? God, please tell me
 I been part of it for fifteen years
 And I still don't get what's life
 Been messin' up
 'Cause I didn't care
 Turning my life around
 'Cause I don't wanna be just a number
 I wanna be that someone that's famous
 That everybody remember
 Writing wit' a passion
 I never knew I had
 An' that truly amazing
 'Cause I had to go to the Ranch
 An' I just wrote 'bout
 The problems I was facing
 It came to me naturally
 Like it was hidden in my soul
 Hidin' for too long
 Now it explodes
 My fifteen years on this earth
 Was a crazy one
 But it makes me who I am
 With all them bumpy roads
 I don't lie
 Nor do I sell them woof tickets
 I tell the truth
 'Cause that's what I do
 An' I don't care 'bout them haters
 It is what it is
 But you make it what it be
 You only hatin'
 'Cause you don't understand me
 So see y'all later
 An' hatin' back will only destroy ourselves
 An' I ain't gonna lie
 I sometimes hate, too
 But that's what I'm workin' on
 We ain't perfect, man
 And we don't change overnight
 You gotta work on things
 Just to make things right
 I been thinkin'
 An' life to me is another form of hell on earth
 'Cause look at all the bullshhhh we go through
 Like another test I have to take
 And the results tellin' me how I did
 Is when I die
 Just doing what I do

"IT"

I never thought "IT" would be like this, I mean, I aint nobody explain "IT" to me at length and I can't blame "IT" on that alone, because I showed no interest in "IT" nor did I inquire about "IT." But damn,...somebody should of said something concerning this stuff here! But you know, I guess should'a, could'a, would'a.

If somebody would of tried to explain "IT" to me, I probably would of listened then continued on the path I was already on, and even then whatever was told to me would be dependent upon if that person was conscious of this stuff or just basically a victim of "IT."

At least if I'd of had head start at being aware of "IT," I'd of been able to duck and dodge a gang of B.S., instead of crashing into "IT" head on. But then again experience enhances wisdom, but I still wish I had of been told about "IT." I've done "IT" a little time before, nothing major and I even touched "IT" on juvenile level back in the day. My mom had mentioned something about "IT" once or twice but she mentioned "IT" in a tough love-scared straight manner, which didn't faze me the least bit because I grew up in the 80's, in fact I was 12 years old in 1985 so by the time I was threatened with going to "IT" I was like "oh well." Few years go by and next thing you know I'm in "IT." I understand that times change, sometimes for the better, other times for the worst. In the case of "IT" changing for the worst, "IT" being "prison" is pretty much an understatement!

Prison is foul. I would of never in a million light years thought that I'd have to live within and witness the things I have, while being held for what will amount to be a significant amount of my young adult life, I should of seen all the signs indicating that things would continue to get worse. I now fully understand how I missed all of the signs due to me being unconscious of reality, history, racism and fascism.

I'm trapped here, surrounded by all that is negative and regressive. Race, age and I.Q. level seems to have no bearing when it comes to the ignorance that's displayed by the majority of inmates who are imprisoned right along with me. The actions and statements that are made by grown men in prison are pathetic and just as common as an illiterate person being ignorant. No disrespect to people who have down syndrome, but you know how people who have that disease tend to look identical to one another, be they African, Caucasian or Asian? Well its as if many of the inmates here are also alike not in there physical features but in their actions and mentalities as if they are suffering from a form of ideology-personality down syndrome.

A slave would resemble who these inmates act like. They appear to be child like by conforming to any and all the rigmarole stunts that the guards demand of them. These inmates eagerly await for chow, dayroom, lockdown releases and the almighty "Thursday Morning Matinee," which is when they are shown two movies that are either "PG-13" or "rated G" and all that can be heard while the movie is on is "Hee-heee, haw-ha' man, uhh-hawww."

Inmates don't follow the saying of "hope for the best, but expect the worse" they instead hope and expect the best and lay down during the worst. I personally would like to experience the best, but I expect and prepare for the worst. Thinking like this doesn't make me pessimistic, on the contrary it makes me optimistic, because everything that these guards do is very simplistic. But it all depends on how you perceive reality and what pedigree you were cut from because the atmosphere here shouldn't be a surprise especially when these rouge vindictive guards don't disguise their intentions and motives.

So now you know why I wish I had of been told about "IT," perhaps "IT" would of made an impression on me and I would of took more evasive action or maneuvered in a different way to avoid "IT." But what's done is done and now I must suffer the consequences of changed times and everything else that comes along with "IT"...I just wish I could of missed it altogether and still received the wisdom from "IT."

L.M. Writing about the hypocrisy of the system — you know, here to serve and protect when really in our neighborhoods it's about under serving and neglect, we bring to you a prolific writer all his own. Writing from High Desert State Prison in Susanville, CA, this writer hits us with a poem and a missive describing the harsh realities of incarceration. And for those who spend lifetimes doing everything in their power to remain disconnected from our population and the fact that they are somewhat responsible, we feel you should read this. Not everything is all peaches and cream about our society. In fact, it's not wise to sweep our 'problems' under the rug, especially when those very same 'problems' will eventually find the time where they're no longer under the rug anymore. Just a thought... If you want to hear better ones read on and witness the intelligence of this next writer...

Cops, prosecutors and judges,
run a prejudiced system
The people they claim to help,
end up becoming victims.

As I Entered The Prison Center

When I first came to prison, I had a preconceived thought
Of a place where criminals were sent to, after they'd been caught,

But then my third eye opened and I began to focus
Among criminals were the innocent, oppressed and the hopeless.

Cops, prosecutors and judges, run a prejudiced system
The people they claim to help, end up becoming victims.

You get sent to prison "as punishment," convicted of a crime

Not to be "punished" by correctional officers
Until you've completed your time!

I heard that injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere!

But in prison ain't a shred of evidence containing
"rehabilitation" nowhere!

Prisoners pitted against each other, police tactics are ploys,

Riots erupt on yards causing men to be used as human toys

Recycled air, concrete and steel has an adverse effect
On the mind state of a prisoner that's impossible not to detect.

Daily disrespected, tormented and blatant racism
Question authority and the reply is simply "THIS IS PRISON."

Portray convicts as evil monsters that the public should fear,

Then keep society retarded to the cost of keeping me here
Tax payers pay 30 G's a year per inmate

No other country has more facilities than California "The Golden State!"

Break up marriages, split families is what these walls are all about,

Ex-cons stagger and stumble up out of prison, lost and turned out.

Guards crate an atmosphere that's detrimental to me
Then complain about my rage, I live here, they're just employees

Too bad I didn't hear about these things from reading a letter,

Instead I lived and witnessed this shhh!, as I entered the prison center.

LADARO PENNIX In October, 2004, Ledaro Pennix, incarcerated in Corcoran State Prison, learned he had lost his last state court appeal and, unless the federal courts overrule the state court decisions, he would be spending the rest of his life in prison. After leaving the California Youth Authority at age 16, he came under the influence of men much older than he was, who manipulated him and set him up. Although he accepts responsibility for his role in what went down, he was overwhelmed with outrage, shock and sadness at those who had betrayed him. Here in his new essay, Ladaro is spitting some knowledge for all you in Juvy, ranches, YA and prisons, to warn y'all and to help you know that you don't want to follow in his footsteps.

My Appeal

My last state appeal was unsuccessful. To me it was truly a shock and devastating to lose my appeal. For the first time I actually felt the impact of my life slipping away to the system. In prison you have so many people around here claiming that they're innocent, that when you finally do get one around here who really is, no one cares, because that person is assumed to be just singing the same old song as the rest.

As a youngster, I allowed myself to be suckered, played, manipulated and railroaded. That's what happens when you're an uneducated thug with no desire to evolve. In this world people take advantage of the young and naïve for their own personal amusement and sadistic pleasures. This is something that I've never been able to grasp.

It starts from our inner cities (gang life,) and transcends into the culture of adulthood where those more experienced ill minds prey on those who lack the maturity to not be influenced by the hype of street life. They think selling dope, robbing innocent people for their hard earned money, shooting each other, killing each other and other innocent lives, will all make them the "ghetto superstar" they strive to become.

But what they fail to realize is that their dream of becoming a ghetto superstar is nothing more than the greatest hoax that has been played upon the ghetto youth by the founders of the "ghetto experience." What they never tell the youth is that yeah, doing all those things may get you recognized by your ghetto society today, but once you're in jail or on the run, it's out of sight, out of mind, which means, once again, you're a nobody.

So many youth think they know it all because they feel they've been through so much of this and so much of that. They think, because they're getting attention from an OG or dudes from their hoods, that are reputables, that they need to follow those individuals so that they can become

like them. What they don't realize is that those OGs and/or reputables have already given up on their own lives, and since misery loves company, they encourage you to be like them, so you can give up on your life, as well. That causes you to lose sight of your divine innocence and potential to become something wonderful and extraordinary.

On the streets I beat up people, I robbed people, I sold dope, I carried weapons and I showed no respect to authority figures of any kind. I thought I was super hard and smarter than everyone around me. I thought I could not be touched, and that those who tried would be running scared once they knew who they were dealing with. Those who I ran with encouraged that behavior and fed that ill-mentality to the point that I knew nothing other and wanted to do nothing other than to live and die in my thugging lifestyle.

When I got gunned down in my 'hood, there was not one OG homeboy or reputable from my neighborhood who said I should stop living the life before the life lives me, and I find myself dead or in prison for the rest of my life.

No, no...what they said only brought me deeper into their misery by selling me the hype that getting shot up was like a badge of honor. And that it shows how so-called down I am for my hood. But the reality is, I was just another victim of the street violence that I contributed to, and that I was only getting back what I put in. If you do wrong, wrong will come back on you tenfold, and, likewise, if you do right... right will be done to you tenfold.

I was never able to see and embrace my divine potential, because I allowed the street life to cloud my vision with the hype dream of becoming a ghetto superstar. Each person confined and in a gang is a victim of that hype dream. They all desired to be the next ghetto superstar—from the kids in placement, camp, Juvenile Hall, CYA, ...to the men in county jail and prison. We all fell for the dream. Some are still caught up in that hype dream to the point that when they come home, they're going to continue to chase the hype until it's too late, and the hype has them caught up in a dead end with no way out. It's sad how we've allowed ourselves to be so brainwashed by the hype dream of becoming a ghetto superstar.

But, you know what? I bet if you ask anybody in prison who has "life" or anybody on death row, they will tell you to don't believe the hype! Because we are clear examples that the cost of becoming a ghetto superstar is not worth the price which you pay afterwards. That price is the loss of your life, of your identity, of your mind, and of your spirit. When it comes to the hype, a little bit of pleasure will cause a lifetime of pain.

SUICIDE As a man standing up to the majority and their beliefs about God, this next writer brings opposition that you may not agree with depending on your view of religion. Whatever the case, you must respect his talent as a poet because his way with words demands it. He gives us two parts to a poem called 'Heretic,' which means, somebody who holds or adheres to an opinion or belief that contradicts established religious teaching. And since we attempt to respect as many opinions as we can, we kept an open mind and learned a few things. We kind of wish he'd change his name so as not to influence any of our readers to come up with a permanent solution to a temporary problem. He's writing from the California Correctional Institution in Tehachapi, California. We're sure some of you will disagree with him, but we're all entitled to our own opinions and frankly we encourage different perspectives...

Heretic

you're not going to spin me with you sophistry,
or your optimistic philosophies,
you want me to believe he's holier than thou,
but you're created in his image so i know he's foul,
you exhort me to white knuckle your rosary
to ask the goddess and her angels for help,
you ask me to walk as your savior has walked,
at the expense of being myself,
we're all fallen angels,
reflections of the divine thug,
microscopic demons,
spirits that yearn to be loved.

Heretic Part Two

I've broken your dogmatic shackles,
I tore them from my body like delicate cloths,
I'm no longer your drone,
I assert my individuality with the strength of inquiry,
Find another drone,
Find a pupil that doesn't mind the suspension of
scrutiny,
I'm not your type,
Not even desperation will subjugate me,
You fail to answer too many questions,
Faith is your palliative,
I'm not enchanted with your descriptions of paradise,
Your evangelical wiles don't work on me,
My mind is impervious,
To dogmatic propositions,
Don't waste your resources on me,
Just ignore me.

we're all fallen angels,
reflections of the divine thug,
microscopic demons,
spirits that yearn to be loved.

Questions

Some may think this question is somewhat odd;
But how does a person, get to know God?
So I'm asking Sister Rhonda Jones this;
Because in her life, a living God exists.
She said their relationship started when she started
praying;
And when she started understanding, what the Bible is
saying,
Then I asked her how did she know that she is born again?
She said by repenting and then turning away from sin ...
She said the reason why she's no longer lost;
Is because Christ paid the cost on the cross ...
She said if anyone wants to know Christ; to read the Bible
And take heed to all of God's advice,
She said she be having a Bible Delicious time:
Being transformed by the renewing of the mind,
She said the life that Christ demonstrated:
In us must be imitated,
First of all you have to believe and have faith;
That Christ's death on the cross was not a waste...
Then our self-will has to stop demanding;
To allow Jesus Christ to do the commanding...
We have to get rid of our old self-behavior;
And allow our thoughts to be renewed by Christ our savior.
At first it might seem strange,
Because you will go through a subtle change.
She said this is how, I will know,
When Christ in me, begins to show ...
So this question is not a façade;
Because I Stacy want to get to know God.
At least now I know where to begin;

STACEY Introduced to us by our very own spiritual master mind and inspirational poet, Rhonda Jones, Stacey asks some really good questions and in the process comes to her own conclusions. With the help of angels like Rhonda, she's been able to find God and turn her life over for the better. Some people read a book and become enlightened while others turn their lives over to a higher power. Whatever the case, we feel like as long as the results are like that of this next writer it needs to keep happening. She's writing from the Connecticut Correctional Facility in Niantic, Connecticut. And we're so happy she's met a soul like Rhonda's because we've witnessed the power she possesses and know she can introduce people to a better way of thinking. So relax and witness the thoughts of this next beautiful soul...

Be believing in Jesus Christ's resurrection...
And for all the years I sought to have a brilliant mind;
It was Jesus Christ, that I needed to find.
Now I have a better understanding.
I just have to submit to the power of God's commanding..
She told me to read my Bible, with a willing heart:
And to trust in God, to do His part..
Stacey then asked does Christians still have fun:
I told her there is only joy, love and happiness, in God's
kingdom,
I told her to no longer live behind a mask;
Because the dumbest questions are the ones never asked.
So this poem Rhonda and Stacey combined together;
For others also, to get to know God better.
To the best of her ability Rhonda broke it down;
Stating she once was lost, but now she's found.
The Bible says "its the truth that sets us free":
And what God did for her, He'll also do it for me.
Being that I don't want my life to get worse:
I've decided to put God first ..
P.S. Stacey, God is not interested in perfection;
He's interested in your heart's direction.

I told her to no longer live behind a mask;
Because the dumbest questions are the ones never asked.

ROBERT This next writer is special in that not only is it his first time but he also makes it clear in his letter to us that he's not into writing pieces about drugs, violence, gang-banging, or nothing else like that. He's strictly a love poet that conveys feelings of affection and romance. We find that rare in the situation he's in — nineteen, in prison for the first time starting a 25-year to life sentence. Damn, and he has a heart that bleeds passion all over the page. He writes from Kern Valley State Prison in Delano, CA and we're sure when he sees this published a smile will appear across his face...

Solemn Truth

I've been feeling this way for quite sometime
Been contemplating on how to tell you so I figured to
write a rhyme
Yeah I hope I'm doing this right
Wouldn't want you to change up
Act awkward
Or say goodbye

There's something special about you
How could I choose you're the best I'm like so into you
Beautiful and true
In everything
And all that you do
A girl like you in my life
I ain't ever tryna lose

Now as you can see
That this is more than a crush
But I'm in no rush
'Cause it's a must that I get a little closer to you
What am I supposed to do
If my feelings are definitely true
Thoughts of me moving oh hell naw
I only wanna be with you...

STEVEN Writing from the Charlotte Correctional Institution in Punta Gorda, Florida, we give to you a man on a mission to let those free ladies know that if they have a 'Prison Boy' they have someone who's down for them. So much so they'd be willing to die for that woman. And although it's a sad fact that when in jail there's not much you can offer a woman living freely, we have to say he's got us convinced that there are some good people ready for commitment in jail. However, we're not a dating service so this is not an introduction pen pal piece. But true to Beat form, it's a piece that takes an idea we write off as being right and flips it to make you believe the exact opposite — brilliant. Hopefully him and his friend Leija will continue to write for us because so far we've enjoyed their stuff.

Prison Boy

Prison boy came home one day
To find his true love has gone away

And when he found her why
And with these words she reply
If you would had love me true

I would have gladly married you
But since you lived your life of crime
Prison boy go do your time

The next day prison boy laid dead
And on a letter this is what it said
Dig a grave, dig it deep,
Lay a red rose upon my feet
And upon my chest a dove

To show the world I died for love
So ladies, if you have a prison boy
Love him true
Because one of these days
He will die for you.

... the cost of becoming a ghetto superstar is not worth the price which you pay afterwards. That price is the loss of your life, of your identity, of your mind, and of your spirit. When it comes to the hype, a little bit of pleasure will cause a lifetime of pain.

check out the rest of Ladaro Pennix's BWD piece on page 54

